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# DIVES AND LAZARUS;

OR THE

ADVENTURES OF AN OBSCURE MEDICAL MAN

IN A LOW NEIGHBOURHOOD.

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LONDON:  
JUDD & GLASS, NEW BRIDGE STREET,  
AND GRAY'S INN ROAD.

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# DIVES AND LAZARUS:

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ADVENTURES OF AN OBSCURE MEDICAL MAN

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## CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION TO THE READER—MY ANTECEDENTS—THE  
SAILOR—THE CURATE—THE WOMAN OF QUALITY—  
THE YOUNG WIDOW—THE TWO WIVES—RESULTS OF  
MY EXPERIENCE OF LIFE.

AMONG the transactions of life, of secondary importance, there are few things more difficult than for an author to introduce himself to his reader—certainly none more disagreeable. In the present instance the difficulty is especially great, for the writer's antecedents are of the most common-place description; he has done nothing to interest the public on his behalf, and the work he brings forward is merely a description of incidents of every-day life.

The last voyage of an enterprising traveller, the account of a prolonged and desperate siege written by the general himself, or even the diary of an elderly gentleman who, in his youth, had mixed in fashionable life, and who now retails very common-place sayings of (to the uninitiated) very common-place men, are almost sure to command attention; but unfortunately I am not one of

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these—though it is only by putting myself in competition with authors of the last-named class, that I can have the slightest prospect of success. The public has of late been so overwhelmed with records of gentility, that possibly the adventures of an obscure medical man in a low neighbourhood may have some chance of a favourable reception, if only from the boldness of the contrast.

My history includes but little that is interesting or romantic. As a youth, I remember nothing that distinguished me from other boys. Like them, I was sent to school, but, though slight of my age and delicate in appearance, I did not, as is usual with the authors of autobiographies, step between a sickly lad and the overgrown bully of the school; I did not challenge the latter to fight, and, after a long combat, in which the probabilities were strongly against me at the beginning, succeed at last, to the great joy of my class, in giving him a sound thrashing; on the contrary, I avoided disputes as much as possible—not that I think I was a coward, but I had no wish to hurt any one, and had myself a great horror of a blow. This feeling I have retained to the present day, and still hold that the man who is quick at giving a blow, would be very likely to receive one without feeling himself much dishonoured by it. With respect to ability, I was about up to the average—neither superior nor inferior to the generality of boys of my age.

The period of my apprenticeship was equally uninteresting. Hardly a circumstance occurred during the whole five years that could engage the attention of the most willing reader. My studentship at the hospital might offer some details of interest to the professional reader, but to the public at large, none whatever. After obtaining my diploma, I received an appointment as assistant-surgeon in the army, and, after the ordinary time, joined my regiment in India. Here my life was anything but agreeable. I held a somewhat exalted opinion of

the dignity of my profession, and its utility as a branch of the service. My colonel, on the contrary, thought little of its utility, and looked upon its professors as occupying a very inferior position to the other officers in the regiment. Seeing men die continually around me from circumstances the easiest to control, I ventured to show how much the application of a little common sense might do to remedy the evil, and received a severe reprimand for so gross a breach of professional etiquette. An epidemic arose, which was greatly aggravated by the unrestrained indulgence of the men in bad spirits and fruit. I brought the circumstances under the notice of the colonel, and pointed out the effects. He replied, with an oath, that he would not make his men prisoners for any doctor; and concluded by hinting it was my ignorance of my profession that caused the extra mortality. Every new death that occurred increased my unhappiness. I considered that a certain knowledge of animal physiology ought to be possessed by the commanding officer of a regiment. The colonel seemed to think his total ignorance on the subject became his exalted position, and refused to listen to any suggestions that I made. The result was, that one day, more than ever annoyed at his behaviour, I expressed my opinion of his abilities with more candour than policy. This was reported to the colonel, who was naturally much incensed, and swore that I should leave the regiment. The senior surgeon was absent from ill health, and, as the sickness continued, I was not put under arrest, but it was arranged that I should quit as soon as he returned. This event took place about six weeks after the rupture, and, to my unqualified satisfaction, my career as a surgeon in the army terminated. It must not, however, be imagined that I left with the ill-will of the regiment generally; on the contrary, I was much liked by many. The majority of the officers were married men, and my

behaviour to my female patients was always respectful, without the slightest timidity, while my attention to the children was unremitting as well as patient. Thus I had gained the goodwill of all the parents ; besides which many of the officers were men of education, and evidently sympathised with me, and took my side in the dispute. The day at last came, and I started for Calcutta, carrying with me the good wishes of many, and the ill-feeling of no one but the colonel, whose contempt for me had in no way abated. If reciprocity be natural to man, I certainly had no right to object to that sentiment on his part.

I remained some months at Calcutta, and my funds were diminishing rapidly, when I made the acquaintance of a rich merchant from Ceylon, who was on the point of proceeding to China. He was a great invalid, and finding that he required the attendance of a medical man daily, I offered him my services in that capacity. My proposition was readily accepted. He was most liberal, and I by no means avaricious ; so that, in less than an hour, everything was satisfactorily arranged, and we left Bengal the next week for Canton.

From China we proceeded to Ceylon, where my friend and patient possessed a large coffee plantation. I remained with him, and assisted him in its management, occasionally, as his transactions required, making voyages with him. After I had been his constant attendant for twelve years, death separated us, and, as soon as his affairs were wound up, I proceeded with my savings, which amounted to about nine hundred pounds, to Australia, where I engaged in sheep-farming. Things continued to prosper, but an uncontrollable desire to practise my own profession induced me to leave my farm to the management of an agent. I purchased a piece of ground, close to the newly-established colony of Melbourne, built a cottage, and recommenced my profession with moderate success,

occasionally visiting my sheep-farm, which continued to prosper. After the discovery of the gold mines, the value of land increased immensely in the vicinity of Melbourne, and, watching my opportunity, I sold my cottage and garden at an enormous profit. I then disposed of my sheep-walk to good advantage, and have now returned to England with more than a competency, but still with the settled determination of practising my profession as soon as I can find an eligible opportunity.

I am now far from young, without being absolutely old. Like Kent, "I am not young enough to love a woman for her singing, nor old enough to doat on her for anything. I have years on my head forty-eight." My knowledge of the world is certainly as accurate and extensive as falls to the lot of most men. Of human nature I have also had opportunities of obtaining knowledge in all parts of the world; and—thanks to the habits of observation acquired in the practice of my profession, as well as to my naturally retentive memory—those opportunities have not been lost. Altogether, the balance of the account tends to raise my opinion of humanity considerably. It has had the effect of placing many of my acquaintance, and occasionally other persons before me, in a very different light to that under which they appear to the world at large, and perhaps may offer some excuse for a certain cynical habit of thinking I am occasionally accused of. That bold, bluff sailor, whose known courage is accepted as an excuse for a roughness occasionally amounting to coarseness, I have seen, in a moment of apparently inevitable shipwreck and death, furtively but incessantly place the rum bottle to his lips. His tendency to blasphemy, and even intoxication itself, disappeared in the terror that overwhelmed him; while that pale-faced and effeminate young curate—a passenger in the same ship—rose from the scared crowd around him, like a true

soldier of his God, and prayed with such calm dignity to the Almighty for resignation to His will, and for mercy upon the souls of all there present, that he not only robbed what seemed to be inevitable and immediate death of half its terrors, but also left a lasting example of courage to his hearers.

That stout, matronly woman of quality, whose cold dignity of manner chills all who are beneath her, whose brightest smile sheds no warmth—who, on the warmest days of summer, rides through the poor streets, on her way to the railway station, with both the windows of her carriage closed, that neither her eyes nor her breathing may be affected by the squalid poverty around her—is to me acting a part in a senseless, degrading fashionable masquerade. I have seen her, formerly in India—when she was but a captain's wife, and when pestilence was striking down rich and poor alike—walk with her life in her hand by the sick men's beds, administering to their wants, cooling their parched lips, and then, in spite of her fatigue, turn to their sick wives and children, repeating there the same kind acts—cheering the down-hearted, and praying with the dying—and, when the scourge of heaven was at its fiercest, and cheeks paled that had always flushed in battle; when the regimental bully, his duties being over, shut himself up in his room, and held no communication with his brother officers, I watched that cold woman of fashion, as she took from the still warm, pestiferous corpse of a corporal's wife, an infant crying for that milk which was now poison, and, without hesitating, placed it to her own breast. For days she nourished it with her own child—thus performing a cool, bold act of daring, that man might find some difficulty to equal, but could never surpass.

That young widow with her two boys—how interesting does she appear! The loss of her husband, now of more than a year's date, is incessantly on her

lips. Each trifling circumstance of every-day occurrence conjures up a reminiscence of his life. All her thoughts are of him—and he in Heaven. Her children's welfare is her only care on earth, and all her energies are engaged in their behalf. Her boys are most unlike. One, handsome and delicate in appearance, much resembles his mother, whose side he never leaves. He is evidently her darling. The other is plain and somewhat rough in manner, but always most obedient and affectionate to his parent, though occasionally intractable to others. He is equally cared for with his brother, but evidently is hardly as well loved. I attended the father on his death-bed. As the last agony approached, his wife's feelings were so harrowed that she left the room, her darling boy assisting her. The young shock-headed lad remained; and, clasping one of his dying parent's hands in both his own, wept as if his young heart would burst. When life's mechanism stopped, his elder brother, from the door, requested me to see his mother, who had fainted. I felt her pulse; it beat with remarkable equanimity. I gave her some common stimulant; left her to her son and maid; and, entering the dead man's chamber, found that the other boy had thrown his arms around his dead father's body so firmly, that I was obliged to use considerable force to remove them.

That cheerful, merry wife to that surly, brutal man, is to me a wretched profligate, who has frequently driven her husband to a state bordering on insanity; and that inert woman, matched to a most energetic helpmate, is a victim to an act of his villany, whose consequence a lifetime will not cure, while it cost but a few days to obtain her forgiveness.

With experience such as the above, may I not be excused if I look on mankind with a somewhat too



suspicious eye? Nevertheless, its general result has been this:—I have never found an individual who held a higher rank in his neighbour's estimation than he deserved, without finding at least one other whose character more than compensated society for the fraud practised upon it.

In religion, though an attached member of the Church of England, I perhaps should be puzzled to give my reasons for preferring it to others, beyond the fact of my having been taught its doctrines in my youth. I bear love to all who worship in the name of Christ; and my sentiments are so much those of a free-thinker, that I believe all who worship Him are right, and view with something very like disgust those barriers that priestcraft has so often planted between the different classes of Christian brotherhood. I have great faith in the Catholic doctrine of good works, and admire the energy and perseverance they show in carrying it out. I can also see great beauty in the doctrine of purgatory; but, as a physiologist, I detest the confessional so firmly, that nothing less than the strong arguments of the Spanish Inquisition could make me a proselyte to that creed. With respect to the doctrine of good works, I am convinced it is innate in all; and the practise of my profession has taught me that a far greater amount of kind and Christian-like feeling exists in this world than appears to the eye of the ordinary observer. The deeds of charity and kindness among the rich are well known and easily established; but those who imagine that that great Christian precept, to love our neighbour, is principally observed by the richer classes, have a most imperfect conception of the amount of good existing in the world. I have invariably found that the lower the position in society the greater is the amount of charity in proportion to its means; and, if philanthropists would take the

trouble to clear away the roughness and apparent vices that surround it—too often the effects of false civilization or political injustice—they would discover an extraordinary amount of love, patience, long-suffering, and charity, which only require a just legislation and a better example in the richer classes to develope more fully; and, as the first rise of Christianity was from among the poorest, so may there be found among them, even in the present day, the strongest attributes of that beautiful worship. This has always been with me a favourite idea; and the result of a few weeks' experience among the poorer classes since my return to England has fixed the opinion so firmly in my mind, that I have been induced to offer the reader a description of some of the adventures I met with during that period, in the, perhaps, vain hope of converting him to my way of thinking.

## CHAPTER II.

ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND—MORTON—HIS EDUCATION AND CHARACTER—MY VISIT TO HIM—THE TWO MENDICANTS.

I ARRIVED in England late in the month of November, 1857, and located myself in a comfortable hotel in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden. I had been twenty-five years absent, and, as will be easily believed, was astonished at the changes I found in the metropolis. When I quitted London, not a railway was even projected, nor had any of the recent improvements been thought of. The first week was dedicated to the search after old friends and brother students; for, perhaps, no profession induces a kinder feeling among its members than my own. Almost all the Professors were dead. Many of my brother students were spread over the whole world; and hardly a British possession could be named that did not contain some friend with whom I had studied. All that remained in London were evidently much pleased to see me. Invitations followed, dinners were proposed, old times were talked over, and old friendships renewed. There still remained one friend in London that I had not seen; and as he will frequently be mentioned in these pages, I may be excused giving a short sketch of his career—premising, that as it will not be much more entertaining than my own, I shall detain the reader but a short time in narrating it.

Charles Morton is the son of a tradesman in Manchester, who formerly possessed considerable wealth, but, through the vicissitudes of a mercantile life, finished his days almost in a state of insolvency.

Morton was educated by his father with great care ; and as he possessed considerable natural abilities, the opportunities thrown in his way were not wasted. When he entered the medical profession, he possessed an amount of general information not very frequently met with among its members. He was not only a good classical scholar, but an excellent modern linguist ; he spoke French and Italian fluently, and was particularly well versed in German literature. When about twenty-five years of age, he obtained his diploma as a surgeon, and passed the Apothecaries' Hall. His parents, proud of his accomplishments, advanced him £2,000 for the purpose of starting him in practice, in the style that his knowledge of his profession and gentlemanly demeanour merited, so that there would be no doubt as to his ultimate success. Never was a more false conclusion arrived at. The possession of this money, instead of encouraging him to advance, acted in a directly contrary manner. Being destitute of that strong incentive to medical fame, necessity, his life was one of elegant and scientific idleness. Music, painting, and the drama had far greater charms for him than the drudgery of his profession. A case, however, which presented any difficulty or interest, was certain of the greatest care, skill, and attention. But the absence of that quackery which is so necessary an element of success in genteel general practice, a want of sympathy and tenderness for the feelings of the anxious mother whose daughter, naturally delicate, had danced till four the previous morning, and, perhaps, partaken of a supper that would have given a postboy a fit of indigestion ; a habit of speaking slightly of trifling diseases which he had cured, instead of assuring the astonished parents that their child had been snatched from the jaws of death, deprived him of all chance of success in that branch of his profession, although his behaviour was dictated only by a strong feeling of integrity. The natural result

followed. His patients gradually sought other advice, and five years after he had commenced practice he found that after paying his debts, scarcely one hundred and fifty pounds of his two thousand would remain. He now gave up his house, sold off his furniture, and accepted an appointment as surgeon on board an emigrant ship. Here a life of perfect misery awaited him. The captain, in whose mind stupidity and brutality seemed perpetually struggling to obtain the ascendancy, kept up a constant quarrel with him from the time the ship left England till she arrived in Sydney. To maintain sobriety and respectability, especially among the females, and to preserve health by enforcing cleanliness and proper diet, was Morton's constant study. The captain, on the contrary, rather encouraged the drunkenness (he sold the spirits). The profligacy received no impediment from him, as it contributed to the amusement of his mates; and he was rather adverse than otherwise to personal cleanliness, as well as that of his ship, considering it interfered with the liberty of his passengers. Arrived at Sydney, he engaged himself as assistant to a medical man, and, after making about £250, returned to England. He then took a small house in one of the poorest neighbourhoods of the Borough, accepted the office of district parochial surgeon, but relinquished it at the termination of the first year, from the conviction that it was impossible to treat the diseases of the poor in a conscientious and scientific manner for ninepence a case, finding his own medicines, especially as one of the most frequent diseases in the locality was fever, and sulphate of quinine cost fourteen shillings an ounce. He still retained the office of public vaccinator, attended two benefit clubs, was in great request in maternity cases, was much liked for his amiable manners as well as scientific knowledge; had no enemies, many friends, a good wife, and fortunately for him, in a worldly point of view, no children.

My first visit to him was on a bleak and rainy winter's evening. I had dined in the coffee-room of the hotel where I was staying, and was sitting comfortably by the fire reading the paper, occasionally turning my head towards the window to watch the weather. As there was no appearance of its mending, I continued at the newspaper till I had read every word, and then, for the first time, noticed the angry look of a gentleman, who must have been waiting for it a good hour. Ashamed of my inattention, I now determined to pay the visit I had been meditating, buttoned up my great-coat, lighted my cigar, and, umbrella in hand, started on my journey. The rain was falling in a most pitiless manner, and its effects were rendered still more chilling by the strong gusts that blew round the corners of the street, for there was a strong south-westerly gale. The rain beat along the pavement as I passed up Wellington Street, and the wind was so strong that I could scarcely make head against it. Crossing the bridge, I found it still worse, and the heavy rain that poured in torrents on to the pavement caused it to shine in the reflected light of the gas like a sheet of polished marble.

On passing the toll-bar on the Surrey side, a female accosted me, and with great earnestness solicited charity. I was half disposed to give her some half-pence, but the idea of unbuttoning my great-coat in such wretched weather prevented me. The woman still followed me. That her distress was real there was no doubting, from the peculiar tone of the voice, that soft, thrilling soprano so often found in Englishwomen when in grief, and which it is impossible for the impostor to imitate. The feeling of selfishness was still dominant in me, and I still refused to assist her. She left me, and proceeded towards the toll-bar. I tried to persuade myself that her tale was untrue, and fortified my position by reminding myself that she

had stationed herself close to the money-taker ; so that she could accost passengers the moment they had copper money in their hands. This observation, if it did not convince me, gave my conscience some relief. These thoughts occupied me till I arrived at the corner of Stamford Street, where another circumstance occurred that entirely changed their current. In the muddy road, near the footpath, and in the broad light of the gas from the baker's shop, stood two wretched objects—a woman, and a girl about twelve years of age. The woman might have been about forty. She was dressed in black, and appeared to have some remains of former respectability on her person. The rain streamed from her limp, torn bonnet, and her thoroughly saturated dress threw a reflected light from the glare that fell upon her from the shop-lamps. She was endeavouring to excite the compassion of the passers-by by singing a wretched ditty in a most piteous manner. The voice, however, was vastly different from that of the woman who had accosted me close to the bridge. The sadness of this woman's tones had evidently been assumed as a stimulant to charity. By her side, holding her hand, stood the girl. She was without shoes, and the wet mud of the road rose nearly to her ancles. A thin handkerchief was thrown over her head and shoulders ; but it was so thoroughly soaked by the rain, that it showed their shape as clearly as the wet drapery of the ancient sculptors did the forms of their figures. But what fixed itself most on my mind, as I knocked the ashes from my cigar, was the narrow, contracted chest of the poor child, which was quite exposed, not being covered even with the handkerchief—showing too well her utter want of vital stamina, and the cruelty and danger of placing her in such a situation.

It was hardly a feeling of charity that came over me,

it was rather one of indignation, and I looked round for a policeman, to claim, if possible, his interference. Not seeing one, I resolved on remonstrating with the woman herself. At that moment, a dirty, stout, slatternly old woman, without a bonnet, rushed from the baker's shop. She had something wrapped up in her apron, beneath which she also concealed her arms. She bent her head to meet the rain, as she prepared to cross the road, when her attention was attracted by the singer's voice. She raised her head; and, on seeing the child, hastily unfolded her apron, and, from a loaf of bread she had thus protected from the wet, tore off a large piece from the corner and put it into the child's hand. Then, hurriedly looking round, she adjusted her apron, and crossed the road towards the railway station. I gave up my idea of remonstrating with the singer, and immediately followed the old woman, without, perhaps, being able to assign a single reason for doing so. I was greatly puzzled at the hurried glance she cast around when she put the bread into the child's hand. The precept, "Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth," for a moment came before me; but when I saw her turn down one of those miserable off-streets, tenanted by the most wretched and profligate portion of the population, and enter one of the first houses she came to, I concluded that the bread she had broken was not her own—that she had stolen it from one, perhaps, more wretched and miserable even than herself. The woman could have no claim to charity after such an act; and I reflected that the gift, which had at first excited my admiration, was, in itself, a species of theft. I tried to calm my conscience with this miserable sophistry; but it would not act, and I continued to be annoyed with myself for my uncharitable sentiments and behaviour, till I arrived at the dwelling of my friend Morton.



## CHAPTER III.

THE LABOURER'S DEATH-BED—PROBABLE FATE OF HIS  
FAMILY—THE WIDOW—THE SON—THE DAUGHTER—  
INTENSE LOVE OF THE POOR FOR THEIR OFFSPRING.

IN the space of less than an hour, not only was the surprise of my visit over, but I had been introduced to Mrs. Morton, apparently an amiable, unaffected woman, an excellent manager, and in every respect the wife for a poor medical practitioner. I had also heard of his past struggles and present prospects, the near chance he had had of being appointed medical officer of health to the district; how the principal vestrymen who had voted against him were afterwards so pleased with him, that they promised him their support on any future occasion. Also, how he had secured the family of the manager of a large brewery in the vicinity as his patients, in consequence of getting one of their servants through a severe case of typhus fever, besides many other incidents of little interest to the reader, and I found myself as snugly ensconced in the little surgery behind the shop, as much at home, as if Morton and myself had been in partnership on that spot all our lives. During a very short pause in our conversation, a series of sharp taps was heard on the counter, in the shop. Morton immediately rose, and leaving the surgery, somewhat sharply addressed the intruder with,

"What is it you want now?"

"Oh, please, Sir," said the voice of a very young girl, "do come and see father; he is so bad."

"I told your mother this morning that I could do nothing more for him."

"Oh, then, do send him some medicine. He is so ill ; and I will pay for it now."

"Why," said Morton, more good humouredly, "your mother told me this morning she had not money to buy food ; how, then, can she afford to pay for medicine ?"

"Yes, but Mrs. Gray, when she saw father was so bad, lent mother her flat iron, and she got sixpence on it. He is so restless, and is never quiet, and seems to find it so hard to draw his breath."

"Well, give him that powder, and say I will come and see him presently—its a penny."

The girl laid the penny on the counter, and left the shop ; and Morton again entered the surgery.

"Why did you take the child's penny ?" I said.

"The poor are all fond of medicine," he replied ; "and if ever I gave it gratuitously, they would always be applying for it, and that I could not afford ; besides, I intend to do more than earn it by seeing the father."

"Can you do him any good ?"

"Not the slightest. He is in the last stage of consumption, and will most probably not live till morning ; but they will take it kindly of me, and it will ease my conscience for accepting the penny."

"Who is he ?"

"A poor bricklayer's labourer, whose life has been one continued punishment under the original curse. The life of a negro slave in a cotton plantation is one of comparative luxury and idleness compared with what he has gone through. In addition to his oppressive labour, he has been obliged to see his wife and six children subsisting upon thirteen shillings a week, a sufficient sum for his own food and dress having been first deducted. His wife certainly has now and then picked up another shilling, but it has always been at the risk of one of her children falling into the fire, or

getting run over during her absence. The result has been what might have been anticipated. The amount of money he received in wages represented an equivalent in food, raiment, and lodging utterly inadequate to the support of the family, even though assisted occasionally in very bad times with a shilling a week and a loaf of bread from the parish. At last the poor fellow's constitution, originally excellent, sunk under it."

"Do you really mean that a shilling a week and a loaf of bread is all he would receive in a hard winter?"

"If he had any work at the time certainly not more, and if without work very little more. This, from the poverty of the whole parish, is as large an allowance as, in justice to others, it can make—but I am going; will you accompany me? From the number of years you have been absent from England you cannot know much about our poorer classes; and if you have any curiosity to see the interior of a London labourer's establishment, you may form a tolerably correct idea of it from this."

I readily accepted the invitation, and we started together. The rain still fell heavily, and we met but few on our road. After passing through several streets, each more miserable than the former, we entered a narrow court of very poor four-roomed houses. A solitary gas-lamp in the centre lighted the whole locality. Into one of these houses we entered, and made our way up the narrow broken staircase, to the front room. It was small, close, and wretchedly furnished. A bedstead, with a dirty, torn curtain, and thin ragged bed-clothes, occupied the part facing the window. Two or three rickety chairs, a small table, a few cooking utensils, and a little crockery, composed the whole of its furniture. By the light of a flickering candle, which seemed to burn with difficulty in the close atmosphere, we saw the dying man's family grouped around his bed. On a chair, near the head,

sat the half wife, half widow. She was sobbing bitterly. Behind her was a female neighbour, making some kindly-meant attempts at consolation, though what consolation the poor creature could receive passes human ingenuity to imagine. By her side stood her eldest girl. She might have been about fourteen years of age ; but sorrow, tears, and dirt had so covered her face, that it was impossible to say what her features were like. At the foot of the bed stood the eldest boy, apparently a year or two older than his sister. He had evidently been at some rough work during the whole of the day, with the intention of adding sixpence to the family exchequer. Near the latter stood three younger half-naked children, gazing on the dying man, with countenances expressive of fear, astonishment, and sorrow combined. Behind the children stood a slatternly woman, with an infant in her arms, the tears pouring down her face, from pure sympathy. The side of the bed nearest the door was unoccupied ; they had heard our footsteps on the stairs, and had left it clear for us. We were received with the respect the poor invariably show to the medical man. Morton advanced to the bedside, I following him. The poor man was dying ; — his gaunt, unwashed countenance ; his chin, with its beard of many days ; his sunken eyes, had all the stamp of death upon them, but the lamp of life was still flickering. As we entered, he looked at us for a moment, and then turned enquiringly to his wife ; the next moment his gaze was on his children, at the foot of the bed. Morton, as a matter of form, felt his pulse.

“Has he taken the powder ?” he asked of the girl.

“No, he could not swallow it.”

The wife and both women looked in Morton’s face. No perceptible expression was on it, but his thoughts were perfectly understood ; his wife buried her face in her hands ; the two women exchanged looks ; the dying man looked from one to the other with an anxious ex-

pression, and then continued to gaze at the poor children at the foot of the bed, occasionally making a sad, ghastly attempt at a smile. His breathing became more difficult, the pauses between each inspiration were longer and longer, and life appeared almost extinct. Strength and intelligence for an instant returned; he raised his head from his pillow, and fixed his gaze again upon his children. It would be impossible to describe the extraordinary beauty of expression that passed across his wan, shrunk features. All the last remnants of life and mind were concentrated in one glance of intense affection. He had paused on the threshold of heaven, to cast one last look of love on those who had made earth beautiful. His head sank back on his pillow, and the certain indications of immediate dissolution appeared. Morton prepared to leave the room; the woman with the infant made towards him.

"Oh! don't go," she said; "it will soon be over."

His wife held the dying man's hand, and leaning her face upon it, wept unceasingly. In a few minutes life was extinct. The accustomed moment of dead silence reigned in the room, and was broken by the accustomed burst of grief from the widow. The woman near her drew her sadly but kindly from the room. The slattern, with the infant, took another child by the hand, the rest following in the deepest affliction, Morton and myself, after closing the poor man's eyes, also took our departure. As we left the house the cries of sorrow were painfully loud, yet barely more so than the efforts at consolation. No solitude was there for grief to indulge in. There was not a room in that small house that did not contain a separate establishment; there was not a room in it that on that night did not find ample space for more than one of the afflicted family.

But little conversation passed between us as we returned to Morton's house. Accustomed though we

both were to the sight of death under circumstances such as these, where a helpless family were left utterly destitute, it could not occur without leaving a sad impression. After supper the conversation was opened by my asking Morton, "What would become of the poor fellow's family?"

"There is little doubt on the subject, I am afraid," he replied; "their career is marked out with tolerable exactness. If they follow the general fate of persons in their position, the mother will attempt to keep her family together, and support her children either by working in a cinder yard or by charring. Perhaps a subscription may be made for her among the poor inhabitants of the court to start her with a basket of oranges; some humble attempt at a widow's cap will be made, and probably a bit of black will be introduced about her neck or bonnet, that will occasionally find her an extra customer among the poor. But all will be insufficient. The infant will die of starvation—want of breast-milk, in fact, though entered in the registrar-general's report under the proximate cause of death, whatever it may be. Or, perhaps, as may very likely happen, she will take it into the streets with her, while she is standing all day on the cold stones to sell her fruit, and the infant will die of an affection of the lungs. The boy—I hardly know him—if he be of sufficient strength he will in time work like his father; if weakly, as is most likely the case, from the great privations I know them all to have endured, he will try to work honestly, and finding it fail he will then most probably turn thief."

"But if the boy tries first to gain his livelihood by honest industry, I should think that must be a great guarantee against the probability of his turning thief."

"You are greatly mistaken, poverty, be assured, is the great parent of theft in this metropolis, among boys especially. But respecting this family, if the mother is absent all day, it follows that things cannot go on

well at home ; and if she escape gin, she will at last enter the union with her children, and the family will be entirely broken up."

— "What will become of the eldest girl?" I asked.

"Poor creature, her fate, I am afraid, is worse than that of the others ; let us not speak of her," he continued, "I can look upon the terrible as calmly as most people, but the fate of poor girls left as she is is more than I can bear to think of. What can she do? She has been occupied solely in assisting her mother. Fit for no employment, there are the three primary inducements to prostitution before her—poverty, example, and innate female love of dress. In less than two years, all memory of her will have passed. She will be a woman with a woman's sins, while yet a child in mind and body. The sorrows, crimes, and health of the unrepentant Magdalen, while yet in the freshest days of childhood, the worn-out life—ere life is hardly commenced—is, I am afraid, her inevitable lot."

— "But are there no means of saving them from such a fate?" I asked.

— "None that I know of ; our clergy are excellent men, but they are hard-worked, and, besides that, I do not see how they could help her. There are many that interest themselves in reclaiming the fallen ; but none that can prevent the fall in localities such as these. Besides, many will look with compassion on the erring sister, that will take no step to keep the infant daughter from sinning."

"Can she not enter the workhouse?"

"The parish would take her, I have no doubt, but though our guardians are most charitable men, they are so overburdened with pauperism, that every case is obliged to be sifted with the greatest care ; and men in their position, who would willingly give the maximum of relief, are obliged to keep rigidly to the minimum. Besides, her chances would be little improved if she

entered the union. When old enough for service, who will take her? From poverty and misery she has been obliged to seek for assistance from the union; and misfortune as deplorable as that is with us a badge of dishonour—the rich will not take her, they will have none but clever practised servants. The middle classes will not take her, for they imitate the great; the small tradesman may do so from economy, but more from charity; and what is the result? Every wretched drab who gets four pounds a year in the neighbourhood, considers herself at liberty to assume superiority, and taunts the workhouse child with her inferior position.—She returns disgusted to the union, and is again engaged by perhaps some poor lodging-house keeper. But her employer, being herself in difficulties, most probably underfeeds the growing girl; she steals some scraps of provisions from the pantry, and gets severely scolded, besides having to listen to some salutary reflections on the impolicy of taking girls from the workhouse; and the result, in the majority of cases, is the same as if they had done without the assistance of the union from the beginning.”

“And the father—did you know anything of him?”

“Very little; he was a common-place, hard-working labourer. He was certainly more sober than his class generally, rose early, worked hard, fared badly, and yet was contented with his lot. The curse of labour he sought of God as a blessing, thanked Him when he got it, and trembled lest misfortune or the cruelty of man should deprive him of it. His sole happiness was in his ungainly wife and squalid children, ennobled by the intense love the Almighty so frequently plants in the hearts of the poorer classes for their offspring—a love increasing in intensity as their poverty grows the more profound. Through my connection with the working classes, which, as you may imagine, has been most extensive, I have become thoroughly convinced



— that pure, unaffected, disinterested family love is far more common among them than in any other position of society.”

It was now not only getting late, but, as Morton had more than once complained of some premonitory symptoms of chronic rheumatism, under which he laboured, I wished my kind friends adieu, took a cab, and arrived at my hotel.

## CHAPTER IV.

A BOY CHANCING IT—THE WOOLSTAPLER'S FOREMAN—  
 THE LABOURER'S SON—A GOOD ACTION OUTDONE—  
 STRONG CHARITABLE FEELING EXISTING AMONG THE  
 POORER CLASSES.

WHEN I left Morton, I obtained from him a promise that he would dine with me the next day. I had just finished my breakfast, and was in deep consultation with the master of the hotel, as to what savoury meats I should set before him, when a note was brought me from Morton himself, stating that the change in the weather, added to the rain of the previous evening, had brought on such an attack of rheumatism as would confine him to the house for some days—a circumstance particularly embarrassing, as his practice was not sufficiently lucrative to allow him to keep an assistant.

As I had always had a great friendship for Morton, and was also much interested, not only in the scene I had witnessed the evening before, but also in the conversation that followed, I determined on offering myself as his assistant till his health should allow him to resume his duties. To this resolution I was somewhat stimulated by the fact that I had no other employment to occupy my time—a position, perhaps, more annoying to a medical man than to one of any other profession. I therefore recalled my somewhat complicated instructions for the dinner, and determined, instead, to profit by the opportunity of seeing something more of the habits and manners of the London poor.

It was nearly ten o'clock when I left the hotel. As I knew that eleven o'clock was the hour at which he left home for his visits, and as I had a call to make in Regent Street before going to him, I took a Hansom cab, so as to economise both time and labour. On the score of labour, my speculation certainly succeeded ; as to time, it was almost a failure, as the horse was lame, and I progressed at a rate but little satisfactory to an impatient man. My commission in Regent Street having been completed, I again entered the cab, and, having given the driver Morton's address, we started off at a somewhat more rapid pace. After we had advanced a few yards, I noticed a four-wheel cab before us, with a large quantity of luggage on the roof, going in the same direction as ourselves. Beside, or rather behind, it was running a thin, consumptive-looking lad of fifteen or sixteen years of age. He had evidently speculated on being employed in removing the luggage from the roof when the cab stopped ; and, judging from the number of boxes the cab carried, the prospect of a liberal remuneration was before him. He was evidently much distressed with the exertion ; his nostrils were dilated ; his mouth open ; a bluish tint was spread over his pallid countenance ; and the muscles of his chest worked painfully. Still he kept on. Occasionally a stronger and an older man would glance at the luggage, with the apparent intention of following the cab. The expression of anxiety that then passed over the poor lad's countenance was most distressing. Once, at the bottom of Waterloo Place, the boy was ten or fifteen yards behind. As the cab turned the corner, a strong, thickset young man, of four or five-and-twenty, immediately made for it, keeping near the off-wheel. The poor lad gave a start forward, his eyes enlarged—though whether with tears or anger, or both, it would be difficult to say—and ran up to the other with a half-defiant, half-imploring look. He was

evidently too exhausted to speak. The other turned, with a surly expression of countenance, that showed he had no intention of relinquishing his right, when suddenly, as he caught sight of his opponent's face, the expression in his own changed. He looked at his slight, frail build, slackened his pace, and sauntered with indifference to the pathway—not a word having passed between them. The cab kept on past Charing Cross, the poor lad following through the heavy mud caused by the last night's rain. Still on, up the Strand, it went. Every short stoppage it made, from vehicles in its way, was taken advantage of by the lad, who tried to attract the attention of the passengers by running to the window, and repeatedly touching his wretched apology for a cap. God forgive me if I wrong any one! but, more than once, I thought I saw a grinning boy of fourteen encouraging him to go on by pointing forward. Again it proceeded: again he was at its side. Near Wellington Street it turned towards Waterloo Bridge. A look of despondency came over him: the idea of the toll-bar presented to him an insurmountable barrier. I saw his eyes following it, while a deep inspiration and sorrowful look told too well his heavy disappointment. Again, for a moment, he brightened, and rushed after the cab as it crossed to the off-side of the road, as if it would stop at one of the houses in Lancaster Place. Vain hope!—the driver had only crossed to avoid the broken granite freshly thrown down on the other side. The cab passed through the toll-gate, and my last glance of him showed an expression of sorrow as dejected, and hopes as broken, as ever I witnessed.

I found Morton far more indisposed than I had anticipated. Confinement to the house, for several days at least, was imperatively necessary, and I volunteered to attend to his out-door practice for him, till he should be better able to attend to it himself. My offer

was gratefully accepted, both by Morton and his wife. "You will find no rich," said he, "among my patients—few even in comfortable circumstances. The destruction of poor men's houses in the City and neighbouring parishes has driven an immense number of the poor into this district; and those who were able to remunerate the medical man have, in consequence, left us. We have here a community of poor supporting each other when in employment, and relieving each other in times of distress. The worst feature in it," said he, with a smile, "is, that the greater the amount of poverty, the greater is my occupation and the less my emolument."

It is not my intention to inflict on my reader the dry details of every case I attended; those only on the list that offer something worthy of remark will be noted. The first of this description was a club patient. He had been twenty-eight years engaged in a woolstapler's establishment, which employed a great many hands. Eighteen months since, he had been struck down by paralysis, and had remained bedridden ever since. For a few days past he had fancied himself not quite so well, and my visit was rather one of consolation to a hypochondriac than anything else. He was much esteemed by his employers and fellow-workmen, and, although a heavy drain on the funds of the club, his allowance was continued without complaint. A trifle was paid him weekly by his late employers, and a few pounds of his own in the savings' bank, placed him above want. The only remarkable feature in the case that I noticed was this. His wife was a very slim, delicate little woman, and he a large, muscular, heavy man. On my noticing the great difficulty she must have in nursing him, she explained it by telling me that two of his fellow-workmen, taking it in rotation, came every morning to lift him from his bed, that she might arrange it, and that they remained there till it

was ready for him to be replaced in it. This attention had continued from the commencement of his illness, and would, most probably, terminate only with his death.

My round of visits was over by one o'clock, and I had returned to the surgery to prepare the different medicines that were to be called for in the afternoon, when the same girl who had requested Morton to visit her dying father again entered the house. I now examined her features more attentively than it had been possible to do the evening before. She was naturally pretty, with a somewhat careworn but amiable expression of countenance. She was evidently short of her age, most probably from hunger and privation. Her thin, sinewy hands were worn almost to the roughness of a bird's claw by hard labour, and her clothing was of the poorest and scantiest description. I asked her what she wanted ?

"Would I come and see her brother immediately ?" Mother thought he was dying, and she would be so much obliged to me if I would see him. He had come home about an hour ago, and was sitting on a chair, when, all of a sudden, he went off as if he was dead. The lodger in the next room came, and poured a little gin into his mouth, and he came round, but not fast. A little while after he began coughing, and then he brought up some blood, and he did it again just before she came out. Mother was sure he was very ill. One of the lodgers remembers seeing a person taken in that way, and she did not live a week."

I, at first, determined to go as soon as I had finished the medicines, but the wan, distressed look of the poor child, and her already reddened eyes again filling with tears, caused me to alter my previous resolution, and, taking up my hat, I started with her on the spur of the moment.

It was well I took the girl with me ; not only was the court difficult to find, but the aspect of the place

was such as I should hardly have liked to ask for it. Bad and wretched as it was at night, it was infinitely worse by the light of day. That dirty, disreputable look of squallid poverty was over it, that gives to the dwellings of the London poor an aspect to be found in no other capital in Europe. I entered the house, and was shown into the room I had visited the evening before. On the bed lay the corpse of the father. A sheet was thrown over it, but it hung so closely to the body as scarcely to conceal the sharp, emaciated features and wasted form. A little fire—not more than might be held in the two hands—was in the grate. A small, empty saucepan was on the hob, and on the table appeared the remains of some potatoes and a few crumbs of bread. On a chair at the foot of the bed was seated the boy. Beside him was the mother, with her son's head resting on her shoulder. Around them were the other children, and two or three female neighbours, completely filling the little room, and rendering the atmosphere nearly intolerable. When sufficiently near the lad to distinguish his features, judge of my surprise at finding him the same whose exertions in the morning in running after the cab had remained unrewarded. Penniless and hungry, he had eaten nothing since twelve o'clock the day previous. He had left his home soon after daylight, for the purpose of chancing it, as he termed it—in plain English, to find some means of earning a trifle by any fortuitous circumstance that might arise, so as to buy food for his mother and the rest of the family. He had lingered some hours in the streets, in the cold air of the morning, without any opportunity of earning a penny, when he attempted to beg, but the policeman warned him away. At last he perceived the cab with the luggage, and, after running after it for a short distance, a young gentleman, as I suspected, beckoned to him to keep on, evidently for the sake of his own amusement.

Overheated by his exertions, he stood some time in the cold breeze to recruit his strength. Other speculations had been equally unfortunate, and at last he had returned home, utterly exhausted. On examining a basin they showed me, the frothy, bright, crimson colour of the blood told too plainly the disease. To leave him in that fætid atmosphere was to kill him ; so I told the mother she must get a cab, and take him to the hospital. "God help her ! she said she had no money to pay for a cab ; and who would give a poor woman like her a ticket for the hospital ? She did not know anybody who had one." My first idea was to give her the money for the cab ; but Morton had particularly requested me never to give money—at least, not directly from myself—and, again, that would not have insured the boy's admission. A slatternly drab, who had just entered the room—on whose face the remains of paint told too well her profession—offered to pay for the cab, but the ticket of admission she did not know where to get—did I ? I felt humbled by the wretched girl's offer. An idea flashed across my mind, and I determined to act upon it. "Call," I said, "at the surgery in two hours' time, with the boy in a cab, and I will have, by that time, procured a ticket of admission for him. It is all on the way to the hospital ; but, remember, the boy must not walk." On leaving the house, I immediately went to the — Hospital, paid my subscription to the Secretary, as a governor, and then requested to see the resident medical officer. I explained to him the case, and he readily consented to admit it.

With something very like self-laudation for the action I had performed, I was on the point of leaving the building, after informing the porter that the case was to be taken in, when my attention was attracted by a short, slim working man, who was ascending the steps to the door. He had in his arms an apparently full-sized girl of twelve or thirteen years of age,



enveloped in a blanket. "Lend me a hand, mate," said he, in a strong Irish accent, to the porter, who had accompanied me to the door—"lend me a hand, or I will let her fall. It's so weak I am I can't get up another step."

The porter immediately assisted him into the hall.

"What is it?" said he, opening his book to admit the case.

"It's a dreadful burn," said the Irishman.

"Is she your daughter?" inquired the porter.

No; she's the daughter of a poor woman that lives in our house, but I don't know her name, she's coming along now; but being ill herself she couldn't keep up with me."

"Where does she live?"

"In ——— Street, (it was near Morton's); it's a long way from here," he continued, "and I am dead beat anyhow. Might I sit down awhile?"

Here was my good action completely eclipsed; but what I lost in conceit I fully gained in humility.

In mentioning the circumstance to Morton in the course of the evening, I expressed my astonishment at the extraordinary amount of friendship and kindly feeling that existed among the poorer classes towards each other.

"I have from my first acquaintance with them as a hospital student," said he, "held the same opinion. Even among the very lowest and most debased do we find it developed to an astonishing degree. Creatures who are spurned by society, and in revenge prey upon it, will frequently exhibit an amount of affection to each other of the purest description. Among those of any respectability, the manner in which it occasionally shows itself is exceedingly beautiful. I remember a case of this description many years back in the police reports of the newspapers, that fixed itself particularly on my memory. A poor woman found one night, in

the street, a wretched, shoeless, shawlless female child ; she was crying bitterly as the cold rain poured down upon her. From a few questions the woman asked, she found that she was eleven years old, that she had lost her mother, that her father had only the day before brought her to London from the country to seek for work, and had either deserted her, or she had lost him ; she had eaten nothing the whole day, and was so weak and benumbed with cold, she could hardly walk. The woman, moved by pity, took her to her home, warmed her, gave her a meal, and then made up a bed for her in the corner of the room. On waking in the morning, she found her guest had not only gone, but had taken with her some pawnbrokers' duplicates, and some cloths belonging to her daughter. It appeared, however, that a policeman had noticed the little thief leaving the house with a large bundle ; and not finding her answers satisfactory, took her to the station. On being questioned there, she stated the clothes and duplicates both belonged to her mother, who had sent her with them to a new lodging she had taken ; and she was proceeding there when the policeman took her in custody. On asking her mother's name and address, she, with great flippancy, gave both ; but on comparing them with those on the duplicates, both were, of course, found to be false. She was sent to the police court, and the woman was requested to attend. The case was clear against the wretched child ; but the magistrate rebuked the woman sharply for her imprudence—he could not imagine what made her act so incautiously. “My own child is exactly her age,” was the poor woman's reply. The magistrate shrugged his shoulders, and the next case was called. Examples similar to that of the woman pawning her flat-iron to assist a neighbour very frequently occur, not merely when it is required possibly to save a fellow-creature's life, but merely to provide them with a meal, neither

borrower nor lender having a penny in ready money of their own. I have, also, frequently known them, after pawning some trifling article for their next day's dinner, lend a portion of the proceeds to a neighbour in — distress, especially if there were an infant in the case, although their own dinner was inevitably rendered still more scanty by the loan.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE LABOURER'S SON—THE BURNT GIRL—HER MOTHER.

THE next morning, I found Morton no better ; and, as a cold easterly wind had set in, it would have been imprudent for him to have left the house, even if his health had improved. I, therefore, continued my visits to his patients. Nothing particularly worthy of notice occurred during the morning ; and, after preparing the medicines I had prescribed, I determined on visiting the hospital, to inquire after the health of the lad, in whose welfare I had begun to take considerable interest. I found him tranquil, but somewhat despondent. On opening his shirt, the clearly-marked ribs and chest-bone, exhibiting so clearly the action of the heart, with the narrow thorax, showed too well the wretched stamina within him. It would have been imprudent to have made him talk, and I soon left him. Before leaving the hospital, I resolved on seeing the poor burnt child that had been brought in as I was leaving it the day before. The nurse showed me her bed, and told me her injuries were of a very severe description, adding, that the surgeon saw no hope of her recovery. Thanks to the applications, the poor girl did not appear in much pain, but lay quietly in her bed, gazing on a woman sitting on it by her side. She was evidently her mother. She was still young, and had the remains of great beauty. She was trying to smile on the child ; but the strong, the almost spasmodic action of the muscles of the throat, showed with what difficulty she restrained a strong rising flood

of tears. There was something inexpressibly interesting in the poor woman's appearance. Her clothes, although miserably thin and poor, appeared neat and respectable ; and her voice, as she attempted to cheer the child, was mild and gentle in the extreme.

"I shall soon be well, mother ; shan't I ?" said the girl.

"Yes, dear ; I hope so."

"When do you think I shall come out ?" continued the child.

I glanced at the mother. The eyelids were filled to overflowing ; the lower lip quivered ; and the muscles of the thin throat contracted. I immediately put some question to the poor girl from the other side of the bed, and drew off her attention, while the poor woman wiped the big tears from her eyes. At that moment the clock struck four, and the visitors were ordered to leave the ward. I told the mother in the corridor that I was sure the hospital authorities would allow her to stay with her child if she wished it. She told me she would willingly do so if she could ; but she had a baby scarcely three weeks old at home, and she could not leave it long together, especially now the accident had deprived her of the assistance of her poor girl.

"Do you think there is any hope ?" she continued, putting the question as though she dreaded the answer.

"I cannot say ; I do not know the case ; but probably to-morrow the surgeon will be able to form a better opinion. How did it occur ?" I inquired.

"I was taking home some shirts I had been making for an outfitter, and my daughter was boiling some potatoes on the fire. The baby had woke up ; and, being in her arms, by some accident her clothes caught fire. Before she could put the infant down, the flames got too strong for her to subdue. She rushed, terrified,

into the street, when some workmen caught her and extinguished them."

"As a medical man, I should tell you that you ought to wear warmer clothing this bleak weather."

"What am I to do?" said she, sorrowfully; "the children must eat."

"Are you living with your husband?" I asked.

"Certainly," she said, rather sharply.

I found I had touched on a delicate subject, for the poor woman, after an attempt to speak, changed her mind, and walked hurriedly away. But I was destined to meet her again.

I had spent the evening with Morton, and it was getting late when I rose to leave. As I left the house, I met the workman I had seen the day before on the hospital steps. He implored me to come and see a poor woman, whose baby he thought was dying. A presentiment came over me that it was the same woman I had seen at the hospital; and that impression was confirmed by my guide. He was like most of the poor Irish, extremely loquacious; and I obtained from him some particulars of the poor woman's history. "She had formerly been servant in a gentleman's family, and had married her husband, who was a cork cutter, about thirteen years since. He was a good workman, and could always get employment if he pleased, earning from five to seven shillings a day; but somehow, he was so given to drink, that he could never keep a shilling in his pocket when he had got it, and when he had not, he ran into debt. He was always drinking, although he was not generous with it. Not a sup did he ever offer him, although he had done a good deal for his family—not that he wanted it; not he. And it wasn't for the husband that he did it, after all, that was true. It was he who got the wife employed at the army clothiers and outfitters; he was a tailor himself, and no disgrace; he worked for what he got, and did

not want bit nor drop from any one ; but this he would say, that a better woman than the wife never lived ; she was always patient ; and any woman who could be patient with such a brute-beast must be an angel, that she must. She'd work from morning till night, to get food for her children, if she went without it herself. He did not beat her—more's the pity—she might have left him if he had, and better luck for his children."

While chattering in this manner, we arrived at the house. On entering the room, the Irishman left me, and I was alone with the poor woman, who had so strongly excited my sympathy in the morning. She was seated on a chair, near the fire, with one foot on the fender, and the infant in her lap. The candle was on the table, and nearer to her a saucer half filled with poor-looking milk. A teaspoon was near it, with which she had evidently been attempting to feed her child, who plainly had required a far more nutritive sustenance. The room bore the stamp of great poverty, but a neatness of arrangement was visible, that tells the medical man so plainly the respectability of the patient he has to treat. One thing struck me as out of place—the clothes of an older child, evidently those of the poor girl in the hospital, were thrown on the bed.

I enquired of the mother in what way the child was taken ? She answered me clearly and distinctly, but with no emotion, that convulsions came on about seven o'clock, and had continued, almost without intermission, till the present time.

"The child," she said, "was easier now, but seemed much weaker."

So coolly was this said—so destitute of the emotion natural to the occasion—that I saw that a sorrow, evidently sharper, had, to a considerable degree, blunted the edge of the one before her. The mind, like the body, appears capable of suffering but one severe anguish at the same moment. It was rather the effect of natural

maternal instinct, than the result of love, that instigated her present attention to her child.

I felt the infant's hands and feet, they were already quite cold, and dissolution was rapidly approaching. The convulsion threatening to commence again, I took the small saucepan from the hob that had warmed the milk for the infant, and pouring some water into it, put it on the fire. While thus occupied, I heard the footsteps of a man on the stairs, who immediately afterwards entered the room. Not the slightest symptom of recognition passed over the woman's countenance—not a movement did she make—but remained apparently utterly insensible to the entry of another person into the room. I turned round to look at the man, who was evidently her husband. He was certainly nearly drunk, and had his pipe still in his mouth. He took it from his lips, and staring at me, with an absurd attempt at gravity, said,

"If I am not out of order, Sir, may I ask what you are doing in my house?"

"I am a medical man, and I have been sent for to see the child," I answered.

"Do you consider it very ill?" said he.

"Dangerously so," I replied; "I am afraid I shall not be able to save it."

"I consider that child," said he, placing his pipe on the table, "has not been properly treated. The other doctor did not understand its constitution. The medicine he gave did not agree with it; I said so from the first, and he ought to be prosecuted."

"I consider," said I, getting angry, "that it has been food rather than medicine it has wanted." A bitter smile passed across the woman's face, still not a word escaped her lips.

"Food!" said he, "nonsense! If you come here, confine yourself to your business, and pass no reflections on what occurs in my house."



"I simply told you," I said, "what is causing the death of the poor child. It is, no doubt, want of proper nourishment."

"Then why hasn't it had it?" said the drunken brute. "You doctors ought to be able to answer that. The mother is, or ought to be, capable of nourishing her child; it is so with every other animal, and I don't suppose woman differs from all nature. If," he continued, with a maudlin attempt at sentiment, "there had been more done for the child and less for the mother, the poor dear might not now be in the state it is."

The woman's eye dilated as she still gazed on the fire, but not a word escaped her lips.

"On the contrary," I said, indignantly, "if the mother had done more for herself, and taken more care of her health than she has done, it might have been very different with the poor infant at this moment."

"I don't want you to argue with me in my own house," said he. "If your work is done, the sooner you're off the better. The child has had all the comfort I can afford to give it. Have I ever denied it anything?" he enquired of his wife.

Still the same silence—still the same gaze, with dilated eye, on the fire.

"Damn you! why don't you answer?" he said.

She moved, as if to speak. In turning, her eye fell on her child; a shudder passed over her. I looked at it—the child was dying. Another moment, and it was a corpse. Her arms dropped by her side, her chest heaved, and a burst of uncontrollable grief was imminent. I took the child from her lap, to place it on the bed. The husband—who was not aware of its death—cried out, in a greater passion, that he would be answered, calling her by an infamous name, and concluded by pointing me out as her accomplice. I had just placed the corpse on the bed, and was turning

round in a towering passion to answer the miscreant, when my attention was riveted on the wife. In a moment the threatened burst of grief vanished. She had risen from her chair, and drawn herself up to her full height. Her dress, loosened by her last attempt to give the infant the breast, was open in front, discovering the chest. The ordinary mild expression of her countenance was so fearfully altered, I should hardly have recognised it. The face, usually pale, was flushed up to the cheek bones, her lips were white, and her eye glared with concentrated fury. I never saw a more terrible picture of rage and indignation. At first her words seemed to choke her, but, after two deep inspirations, they rushed from her lips with a volubility and eloquence utterly impossible to equal but under great and cruel provocation.

"You call me ——!" said she. "Liar! I never was one—was it your fault, though? Before I had been married to you six months, how did you propose that I should earn money for you, you wretch?"

"It's false!" the man cried, who was evidently greatly alarmed.

"It's true! Didn't I go to poor mother's, and didn't you beg me to come back, saying that you didn't mean it—that you said it in fun—and didn't I forgive you? Fool that I was! You pretend to love your children! What became of my poor boy? Ah, you may well look frightened—what became of him, I say? How was it he fell down stairs and killed himself? Oh, I deserve it all! I swore to a lie to save you. You know it—you knocked him down the stairs yourself."

"I did not, Sir!" said he, addressing me; "the inquest brought it in 'Accidental Death.'"

"You did not? You went down on your knees to me, in the room in Ewer Street, and begged of me to forgive you, and save you; and, shame on me! I did

forgive you. One word from me, and you would have been transported, as you deserved. You call me —— Before the next child was born, what was I six weeks in the hospital for, and whose fault was it? Yours, you villain! And what did poor baby die of? Oh! I ought to be ashamed of myself, for I forgave you again. I don't work for my children, don't I? Look at my hands, Sir," she said, turning to me, and extending her long, thin bony fingers, deeply marked with the needle—"are those the hands of a lazy woman? I have worked day and night for my poor children; and you know, Sir, it died from starving."

"It was her own fault," said the brute, sullenly. "I did not know she wanted anything, or she should have had it, if I'd have stolen it."

"Oh, God! only hear that! I took my work home, Sir, yesterday, and got the money. As soon as I got home, I heard of my poor girl's accident. I put the money—five shillings—on the table and forgot it. When I came back, it was gone; he had been here and taken it; and, had it not been for Mrs. Murphy, I should have had nothing to eat for two days—and I nursing."

"So help me God, it's a lie! The money must have been stolen by some one else, and I'll go and fetch the police, and find out who it was, and give them in charge. I'll find out, I know."

He left the room, evidently using his threat as an excuse to get away. No sooner had he gone than she became calmer.

"Oh, Sir!" said she, "don't think badly of me. I wouldn't have said it, but you don't know what I've suffered; no one living, but myself, can know it; but I'll live with him no longer. As soon as poor baby is buried," she said, turning to the bed, "I'll never set foot here again."

As she bent over the bed, her eye caught the clothes

of her daughter, and all the passion that had supported her immediately vanished.

"Oh, my God!" said she, "pity me. What have I done?" Then, throwing herself on the clothes—"My poor children! my poor girl! Oh, pity me!—what shall I do?—what shall I do?"

As some of her fellow female lodgers had entered the room, I left her in their care, and went home, thoroughly saddened by the events of the evening.

On visiting the hospital, two days afterwards, I found the poor girl was dead. What became of the mother, whose power of forgiveness had exceeded the seventy times seven, I know not. I have never seen her since.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE POOR-RATE COLLECTOR.

IN the course of this morning's visits, I called on a boy suffering from a severe attack of typhus fever. His parents rented a six-roomed house in an adjoining parish. The father was under-clerk to a large wholesale coal merchant, whose counting-house was in the Coal Exchange, near Billingsgate Market. His wife assisted him in his endeavours to maintain his family by letting out and superintending the other rooms in the house not occupied by her own family. She was a kind-hearted and very respectable woman, about forty or forty-five years of age.

Few who have not been accustomed to the practice of a poor neighbourhood can imagine with what severity sickness falls on those whose position just raises them above the working classes, but whose income is, perhaps, inferior to that of the skilled artisan. Still fewer would believe the amount of kindness, affection, and even integrity, such an affliction will call out.

In the present instance, it fell with the full average amount of severity. In ordinary circumstances, the man and his wife slept in the back room on the ground floor; a small bed was made up for the daughter, a girl of thirteen, on a sofa in the parlour; and the three boys occupied the back garret; the other three rooms being let out to lodgers. At present, for the convenience of better nursing, the invalid had been removed to the room usually occupied by his parents—his mother's duties requiring her presence continually

at the door. The parents had removed to the front garret, usually let out ; thereby causing a loss in their small income of three shillings a week. Added to this loss was another of five shillings a week by the poor boy himself having lost his appointment in a solicitor's office, as well as the heavy expenses of the malady itself. Many were the shifts the family were put to to compensate the loss from increased expenditure alone : many were the consultations how the pound a week paid quarterly to the father could extend over the largest amount of the necessaries of life. Often, after a consultation, when the future expenditure seemed satisfactorily arranged, did the father put it down on paper to see there was no mistake ; and, to their great dismay, found that, in conversation, they had made the same sovereign do duty twice over. The threadbare, well-brushed coat of the father, that, in thought at least, was to have been altered for a younger son, when the next quarter's salary should provide him with a new one, was now hung more carefully than ever on the hook in the office, being reserved for another twelve months' duty. The miserable half-pint of beer that had cheered his heart in his daily duties, and that his wife considered so necessary for a man at his time of life, was unhesitatingly resigned. Indeed, poor fellow, he was heard to console himself by saying—"We are all the creatures of habit. I looked upon my beer as almost a necessary of life ; and now, after a week, I like water much better." How far his principle would have agreed with his practice, had any one offered him a glass of stout, it would have been dangerous for any one to have speculated upon. His dinners, as well as those of his children, also suffered by the event. Meat was seldom seen at their table ; and I am afraid the poor mother, in occasionally investing a penny in treacle for the pudding, calculated on the effect that the mawkish sweet would have on the too energetic

appetites of her young. "Her own, she said, was very small since she had been attending on her boy." It was astonishing how much less it had become; and yet her strength was greater than ever, and she hardly felt the fatigue of going without her sleep in sitting up with him at nights. She considered it a wonderful and beneficent ordinance of Providence that always increased the mother's strength in proportion to the labour required for the welfare of her children. In idea the remark was beautiful; but her own haggard look, and pallid cheek, proved it to be but wretched physiology.

I found the poor boy decidedly worse, the cold shivering had increased considerably, and his pulse and tongue showed that his position was more unfavourable than the day before. I again impressed on the mother the necessity of keeping up his strength. I told her, also, that brandy in small doses should be given him frequently. She listened with painful attention to my remarks, and merely asked, whether British brandy would do, as the French was so very expensive. But still, if I wished it, she would get it. While deliberating in my mind what answer to make her, having myself a great respect for the one, and an intense disgust for the other, the door communicating with the parlour opened, and the daughter entered the room. She whispered to her mother, that Mr. D—— wanted to see her.

"Tell him I cannot come now," said she, evidently annoyed; "it is impossible for me to leave, say I will call on him the day after to-morrow without fail."

"He says, mother, he is in no hurry, and he will wait till he can see you; but he will not go without it, as it is very important."

She left me alone with the patient, who, poor lad! was delirious; and, without being indiscreet, I could not help hearing all that passed in the adjoining room.

"Now, Mrs. G——," said a clear voice, quickly but not unkindly, "what am I to do about these poor-rates. I cannot let the summons stand over longer. I have already done more than I ought to do, and I am afraid I shall get myself into trouble as it is."

"I am very sorry," said the poor woman. "Everything happens unfortunately at present. The expenses we are put to with my poor boy really take up every farthing we can scrape together."

"I am very sorry for the poor lad," said the collector; "but I have no alternative. Cannot you make an effort, and let me have, at any rate, a part. As you rent the house, you must receive money from the lodgers; and the guardians are not likely to excuse a defaulter in cases of that kind."

"I assure you I have received no rent from the first-floor for three weeks; and the other room, at the top of the house, I am obliged to keep for my husband."

"But," said he, "you should either make your lodgers pay or give them notice to quit. You cannot afford to lose the money; as, you see, you have not only your own rent to pay, but the taxes as well."

"What am I to do? I cannot seize their goods. I should not rest quietly in my grave if I did such a thing; and, as to turning them out, why, the poor woman has not been confined a fortnight, and, God help them! if I did, I don't believe they would have a roof to cover them and their helpless family."

"Well, that, of course," said the collector, "is a subject for your consideration. It is not for me to advise you as to the management of your own house; but, seriously, I must have some money. I assure you I cannot get the summons held over any longer, and you must not blame me for what takes place."

A moment's pause ensued.



"I could give you two pounds," said she ; "but I should do it with great inconvenience. I have many things to get for the boy, and they are very expensive."

"Well," said he, "I will get them to let the remainder stand over for a month or six weeks."

The poor woman attempted to thank him ; but a sigh terminated the sentence.

A few moments afterwards I heard him wish her good morning, and the street door closed. During the time the collector was writing the receipt, I determined on my course of action. I went into the front room to the mother, whose dejected countenance told too well the sacrifice she had made. I hurriedly gave her my instructions, and immediately went in search of the collector. He was upon the point of knocking at a house two doors off ; but, catching my eye, waited till I came up.

"I have to apologise," I said, "for interrupting you ; but I am a medical man, and am attending a poor lad with typhus fever in the house you have just left, and I unwillingly heard the conversation. I am afraid the payment she made you was done with great inconvenience to herself, and will be, I am still more afraid, prejudicial to the recovery of her son. I have reason to know she is very poor ; and it is equally true that the illness of the boy is very expensive."

"I am aware the poor boy is very ill," said he ; "but I trust not dangerously so."

"Indeed, he is in a very dangerous position ; and all the means at their command are barely sufficient to save his life ; if, indeed, he ever recover."

"I am really very sorry," said he : "they are very worthy and respectable people."

"But," said I, somewhat warmly, "being aware of their circumstances, is it in accordance with common humanity to take their money ?"

"Certainly not," said he, "but strictly in accordance with the spirit of the poor laws, whose officer I am."

I looked at him with astonishment.

"Now," said he, "you evidently consider me a hard-hearted man. I am not. I am aware that on no class do the poor laws act more cruelly than on those whose circumstances are scarcely above pauperism themselves—such, for example, as the poor woman who has just paid me the money. Let us act with common humanity, as you propose, and what would be the result? Look, for example, at this whole row of houses: there is hardly one among them whose tenant is in better circumstances than the poor woman I have left—certainly not one if any sudden sickness or misfortune occurred to them. If I exempted one, would not all the rest be justified in claiming it as a precedent?"

"Certainly. I perceive it is a difficult case; but those who can afford it better should be obliged to contribute more, that cases of this kind might be dealt more leniently with."

"There," said he, "you speak like a Christian and a ratepayer in a poor neighbourhood, but very unlike a legislator—especially a President of the Poor Law Board. If you understood the question better, you would know that in London the wealthier the individual may be, the less he is called upon to contribute to the relief and maintenance of the poor, and the nearer in circumstances he approaches pauperism, the more in proportion he is called upon to pay for its relief. For example, this house is tenanted by a poor man, earning, perhaps, £60 a year. He is employed by a wealthy firm—one whose operations tend to create a large amount of pauperism in this neighbourhood. The wealth of the head-partner may be counted by hundreds of thousands—some say by millions. His private residence is not in this neighbourhood—it is in

a very wealthy parish—yet he pays no more to the relief of the poor he employs than this poor man at whose house I am about to call.”

“Of course, you mean in proportion to their rent,” I asked.

“On the contrary, I mean in the exact sum demanded.”

“But what has caused this great discrepancy? It could not have been the original intention of the law.”

“Certainly not. The original law of Elizabeth is an honour to the country: the manner in which it is abused is a disgrace that has no parallel in Europe. Whenever the poor of a rich parish are getting either too many, or their appearance too squalid, for the eye of gentility, an improvement in some portion of it, but invariably the poorest, is contemplated; their dwellings are pulled down, and they are driven to seek refuge in another parish. This, of course, must be a poor one, as, in a rich parish, no accommodation can be found for them. The rates in their new parish become heavier; but that law which can oblige the poor to enter it, cannot hinder the ratepayer who has money from leaving it. The result is, that the parish becomes daily poorer, till, like this, the poor are obliged to maintain each other.”

“I dare say you are astonished at my ignorance on the subject, but I have lately arrived in England. Do you not consider such a system to be most destructive to all charitable feeling?”

“It acts in both ways, Sir. On the parish authorities its effect is certainly uncharitable, and obliges them to be economical in the measure of their relief. As every fresh call diminishes the number of ratepayers, and increases the number of the poor, their means decrease as their necessities become the greater. The amount—that we give is utterly inadequate to the wants of our

poor. Among the poor themselves, the greater their misery the greater the amount of charitable feeling it appears to engender. In times of great distress, few would believe the extraordinary kindness and sympathy — that exists among them."

"But surely the clergy ought to exert themselves in such a cause as this," I said; "do they not make any attempt to obtain an alteration in the system?"

"The clergy do all that men can do—at least, those that are known as the working clergy. They have continually remonstrated, and their appeals have invariably been treated with indifference, if not contempt. The majority in both Houses of Parliament would be decided losers by an equitable adjustment of the rates, the ministers, on both sides of the House, are too politic to offend them, and the iniquitous system continues unabated. The greater the amount of oppression on the district or individual, the weaker becomes the power of resistance. The poor-rate should be the regulated almsgiving of a Christian community. In one way it is regulated: the rich are exempted from payment solely because they are rich, and the poor are oppressed solely on account of their poverty. Till the working classes take the matter in their own hands——"

Perceiving that the collector was an ultra-radical, and as I eschew politics, I interrupted him by asking if he could do nothing for the poor woman I had left.

"Nothing, Sir! Strange as it may appear, I took those two sovereigns with a humane motive. It was to form an excuse for not pressing for the remainder till their trouble should be over. I would willingly oblige them if I could, but a large majority of our rate-payers are in no better condition. In the eye of the poor law, her chairs, table, and sofa, poor as they are, deprive her of all right to commiseration. We possess a local act which gives us the power of remitting the rate in cases of great poverty. A poor woman called

on me this morning to get her payment excused. I refused to interfere, and told her, as I am ordered, that she should pawn something to raise the money. She took from her pockets a handful of duplicates, and told me she had nothing more to pawn. She was excused. Immediately afterwards another applied on the same errand. I again refused :—

“ ‘You let Mrs. J—— off just now, and I am as poor as she is.’

“ ‘Mrs. J——,’ I said, ‘had pawned all her goods, and could not raise the money.’

“ ‘And I have nothing worth pawning,’ said the woman.

“Now, Sir,” he continued, “you must see I cannot make a precedent for mercy in a case like this, when her goods—though, perhaps, all she is possessed of—are worth at least double the amount of the contribution she is called upon to pay to the relief of the poor.”

I apologized for the trouble I had given him, and left him. The boy ultimately recovered, but the family became more and more poverty-stricken. Their sunken eyes and hollow cheeks told too well the privations they had endured. At last the youngest lad, a boy of perhaps ten years of age, was guilty of some petty theft, and brought before the magistrate at the police-court. The injured party, however, relented, and earnestly beseeched his worship to forgive the child for the sake of his parents, who were most respectable people. The magistrate gave the boy some trifling punishment, and improved the occasion by lamenting the increase of juvenile depravity, and the inexcusable nature of the present case, where every means of good instruction and example had been given to the prisoner. The Sunday and local papers reported the case, headed, “A precocious young thief.” The poor father shortly afterwards left the neighbourhood, with his family and goods. The arrears of the poors-rate were still unpaid

—a fraud in which I am afraid my friend the collector was indirectly more than half an accomplice.

This was not the only case of typhus that I had to attend ; there was another presenting, at any rate to me, circumstances of a perfectly novel character. My patient in this instance, I am sorry to say, was to all appearance a young thief ; but though justice obliges me to designate him as such, I must admit there were many extenuating circumstances in his favour. The den he was obliged to live in was of the most disgusting and squalid character. His ordinary associates were most disreputable ; his parents, I believe, had never been respectable ; they had, moreover, always been poor, and their habitual poverty was transmitted to their son in the shape of a delicate frame and sickly constitution. He was a consumptive-looking lad of perhaps fifteen or sixteen years of age. He was too weakly to dig, the police would not allow him to beg, and skilled labour he had never been taught. He was, therefore, indisputably a thief, and consequently of a character utterly reprobated by every good, honest, and wealthy man, a source of incessant animadversion on the part of the virtuous, and of continual legislation on the part of the Parliament.

During the few visits I made him, I found him well nursed by his mother ; and although everything in their room bore the strong impress of poverty, the expensive necessaries for a case of fever were not wanting. How they were obtained it was not my province to enquire.

One morning I was prevented from visiting him, and on calling the next day, I found all the family had gone. I was naturally much surprised, and I asked a very suspicious-looking little man, standing at the door, if he could tell me anything about them.

"Well, Sir," said he, "the fact is, I don't think you'll see them again—not that they intend any harm to you,

and they'll pay you when they can, for you've been very kind to them ; but they hav'n't got the money to pay you, and it's no use saying they have, so they don't like to see you."

"But the poor boy," I said, "what about him ?"

"Well, Sir, when the old woman got into trouble, the day before yesterday, the medical officer of health got him removed to the fever hospital."

"The best thing for him," I said, "if he could support the removal. But what do you mean about the mother getting into trouble ?"

"Well, Sir, it's a bad affair. You see when Jem—Jem, that's the father—got turned off the same day, and by his own fault too I will say that, they was precious hard up ; and as you said the boy was to be kept well fed, the mother took a piece of beef from a butcher's that she thought she had paid for, and she hadn't."

"What became of her ?"

"When the butcher heard of her misfortune, he said he was bound by justice to his own family to appear against her, especially as she had made a mistake of the kind once before, but he begged his worship so hard to let her down easy, that she got off with a week. But," continued he, "I say again, it was their own faults ; she might have lived on comfortably as possible on that dog."

"You don't mean to say they were dog-stealers ?" I enquired.

"No, Sir, I don't," said he, evidently alarmed ; "and what's more, I don't know anybody that is ; but I'll tell you how it was, if you like to hear."

"I should like very much to hear it, if you have no objection to tell it," I said.

"Why, what objection can I have ?" said he. "I'd nothing to do with it. But, however, close by here lives a veterinary surgeon, and his principal business is in curing ladies' lap-dogs when they're ill ; and—no

offence to you, Sir—but I suspect he makes more by them than you do by attending poor men's children. Well, he's as kind-hearted a man as ever lived, and always ready to do a poor fellow a good turn ; so, when he heard Jem's poor boy was ill, he asked him if he wanted a job, as he had got a very light one for him. Now, Sir, Jem ain't at all strong ; so, of course, he said he should like it very much. 'Well, then,' says the doctor, 'I've got the dog of a lady of quality to cure, and I'm told to spare no expense. Like your boy, it's got a sort of fever, and I told her ladyship it must be well kept up, and, as it should have its broth and medicine given two or three times every night, it had better have a nurse to set up with it. If you'd like the job, Jem,' says he, 'why, there's two shillings a night for you, and I don't think the dog will be well before your boy's out of his fever.' Well, poor Jem thought his fortune was made. The dog was very ill, and the doctor advised some sherry should be put into its broth. Her ladyship, of course, sent the sherry, and a very singular thing it was, but as you increased the quantity of wine for the boy, so the dog required exactly as much more at the same time. Well, Sir, everything went on very smoothly till you unfortunately said the boy ought to have port wine instead of sherry. How to get the port at first fairly stumped Jem ; but he'd do anything for his boy, and the port wine he determined to have. At last, one day, her ladyship called in her carriage to see the dog. The governor was out, so Jem showed it to her.

" 'Dear me !' she said, 'it looks very thin.'

" 'Yes, Ma'm,' says Jem, 'it does ; but the doctor says he's afraid the sherry's a little too cold for its stomach, and thinks port wine would be warmer to its constitution, and agree with it better.'

" 'I will send him some,' said her ladyship, 'as soon as I get home.'



"In the evening came a small hamper for the doctor, and a letter requiring an immediate answer. It was only to say she had sent the port wine as he required, and her ladyship wanted to know if he approved of the quality. Of course the whole affair blowed up. The governor got in a passion, and Jem got the sack."

"Oh!" said I, emphatically, "honesty is the best policy."

"So it generally is, Sir," said he; "and when it isn't, it naturally follows that there's another that's better; but I always says that, even then, it's as well to keep as near honesty as possible."

I found it was better not to argue with my new friend, so I thanked him, and wished him good morning.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE WOUNDED IRISHMAN—THE JUVENILE PICKPOCKET—  
THE POLICE-COURT.

A FEW days after my meeting with the poor-rate collector, I mentioned the circumstance to Morton, who fully confirmed the view taken by that functionary of the working of the poor-law.

"Its effects," said he, "upon the small shopkeeper, and poor but respectable housekeeper—such, in fact, as the poor woman you visited—are intensely cruel, and I have frequently known the rate—that rate, of all others, that ought to be a tax upon wealth—economised out of the meals of the family paying it—positively obliged to share the very bread necessary for their own sustenance with those only a shade poorer than themselves. The amount of demoralisation and misery occasioned by the present system is beyond belief, yet nothing seems to awake the apathy of the Government to the state of the case. In parishes such as this, not only is the poor-rate oppressive on the ratepayer, but the amount of relief is insufficient for the proper nutrition and comfort of the recipients. It certainly contrives to sustain life in cases of distress from want of work, &c., but does it in so scanty a manner as to leave the constitution considerably debilitated when the exertions of the man are again required for labour."

"Without adopting the radical opinions of the collector, is it not to be wondered at that the poor remain as quiet as they do under the treatment they receive?"

“It does appear so at first sight ; but, upon reflection, that apparent resignation is easily accounted for. The collector was right in his theory that, as misery increases, the power of resistance in the oppressed becomes weaker, and, in a poor-law point of view, more contemptible. The man weakened by protracted starvation, or prostrate from fever, offers but little political opposition to the strong. Again, they do not understand the question. The majority consider the affair simply as an act of injustice on the part of the guardians themselves, or even look no further for the source of their misery than the workhouse porter—a theory that every police magistrate considers himself bound, as an organ of the Government, to substantiate whenever a case is brought before him. But it must not be supposed that such treatment is passing without its effect. A sullen, bad feeling is gradually spreading itself among the poor against the rich. They feel themselves oppressed, and, from the complicated mechanism of the law, cannot understand how it occurs. They know the rich are rich, and generally idle, and that they themselves are industrious and miserably poor. A strong idea that they are suffering an injustice pervades their minds, and it may some day exhibit itself in a very terrible manner. I am by no means alone in this opinion. I have never met with any of the clergy in these impoverished parishes—men profoundly acquainted with the psychology of the poor—that did not evidently agree in it.”

Our conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a powerful workman, accompanied by a policeman. The former came for the purpose of having a wound on his head dressed that he had received on the previous Saturday, in a brawl in a distant parish. For some hours after he had received the blow, it was feared that an injury had been caused to the brain, but it appeared later that the stupefaction had been caused more by

drink than the effects of the wound—although the latter had been a very severe one. A short time after he had received the injury, he left the house in which it had occurred for his own home, and had now called at the surgery to have the application renewed if necessary. The wound was perfectly healthy, and, in all probability, the man would, in the course of a day or two, be able to resume his work. The policeman told us it was necessary one of us should appear in court, as the charge had been entered as an attempt to murder, the appearance of the wounded man at the moment being such as to justify the description. It now appeared that the Irishman resolutely refused to give any evidence on the subject. We suggested that a certificate would suffice, but the policeman urged that the magistrate would not like to discharge a prisoner on such a charge, unless it were clearly proved that no danger was apprehended from the wound.

On enquiring where the case would be heard, I found, by a singular coincidence, my own attendance was required at the same police-court, arising out of the following adventure, and I therefore promised the policeman I would give evidence in the case he had charge of.

In the middle of the previous week, I was passing through a very low neighbourhood, when I thought I felt something touch the pocket of my great-coat. On turning round, I found a stripling close behind me. He moved off rapidly, and was evidently trying to conceal something. I put my hand to my pocket, and found that my pocket-handkerchief had gone. The thief ran off rapidly, and I followed him. His knowledge of the locality was most minute. He darted through streets of the most complicated description, and down alleys so narrow that, had I not kept close on him, I should not have noticed them. At last, he emerged into a street somewhat broader than the others.

In the centre of the road was a group of women, in whom the habit of wasting time at their toilets was among the smallest of their faults. They were, without exception, ragged, slovenly, and dirty. In the midst of this group rushed the pickpocket, but in what manner he escaped from it I have not been able to give a probable surmise to this day. My annoyance was increased by the undisguised ridicule of these ladies at my evident disappointment, as well as my muddy condition. Presently another stripling—who, from his appearance, might have been taken for my friend's twin-brother—came up, and asked me if I had lost much.

— “Only a pocket-handkerchief,” I answered.

“Only a handkerchief!” he said, evidently much disappointed.

I looked at him earnestly—he was evidently a thief himself.

— “I will give you two sovereigns if you will tell me where I can find him,” I said.

His eyes brightened.

“Very well,” said he ; and we walked off together. After a few steps, he appeared to reflect on what he was doing.

“No,” said he, “I won't take the money ;” and immediately walked rapidly away.

I then asked the women if they could inform me where the police-station was. Not one of them had the most remote idea. At last I met a policeman, and he directed me. I there saw the inspector, who took a note of my statement.

“I will do all I can to find him,” said he, “if you will give evidence, but gentlemen frequently give us the trouble to catch these fellows, and then refuse to follow up the case.”

As I was still burning with indignation, not from my loss, but for the ridiculous appearance I had made,

I promised faithfully to attend; and on the Saturday evening I had notice that they had found him, with my handkerchief in his possession.

I made my appearance at the court perhaps a quarter of an hour before the case was called on. During the time I had to wait, the attention of the magistrate, as well as of the whole court, was disturbed by the incessant vociferation of a woman, apparently locked up in one of the cells. She appeared to be uttering a torrent of abuse against her husband, and refused to be silent, although the usher requested the jailor more than once to insist on it. When the case had terminated that was being heard on my arrival, the magistrate determined on taking the woman's out of the regular course, and the policeman informed me it was the one in which I was required to give evidence. The woman was brought into court, still vociferating loudly. She was a tall, bony, and very strongly-built Irishwoman. Her clothes were far cleaner than those that generally distinguish her class; and an infant she carried in her arms appeared to have been properly cared for. The woman's face was pale, and intensely excited, and her eye had in it an expression of wildness rather than of ferocity. Her mouth was parched, as might be seen from the action of the tongue and muscles of the mouth to excite the secretion of saliva. The woman, Bridget Nolan, was charged with attempting to murder Patrick Sullivan, on the Saturday previous, by striking him on the head with a hammer, and also with violently assaulting the police. Sullivan's name was called; and as he did not appear, the magistrate asked if any news had been received of the wounded man? The inspector informed him that the case was far less serious than had been at first imagined, and also that Sullivan had refused to appear against the accused. I gave evidence to the effect that I had that morning attended Sullivan professionally, that his wound was of but

trifling importance, and that I considered that the charge at first sight had appeared more serious from the intoxicated state he was in. The case was then simply proceeded with as an assault on the police constable. He swore that on the previous Saturday evening, on passing by the end of the court, he heard cries of murder proceeding from Bridget Nolan's house. He immediately ran to the door, which was closed in his face. He then attempted to effect an entry by opening the window on the ground-floor. While thus occupied, Bridget Nolan threw from the first-floor window a flowerpot filled with earth, which struck him on his hat, and stunned him for the moment. As soon as he recovered he contrived to enter by the window, and found Sullivan lying on the floor, and bleeding rapidly from a wound in his head. On being informed that the blow had been struck by the prisoner, he procured assistance, and took her into custody. On the way to the station she assaulted him again, and tore his coat. The whole party appeared to have been drinking, but the prisoner was not drunk. The assault on the policeman had evidently been of a very desperate character; but it was easy to perceive he mitigated it in his evidence as much as possible. Other witnesses were called, who corroborated the policeman's statement. During the time he was giving his evidence the woman was with difficulty kept silent. She moved perpetually about in the dock, rocking her child. On being asked what answer she had to make to the charge, she commenced a wild rambling statement about the policeman having a spite against her, and swearing to take her life. The magistrate asked when that had occurred? She said about two years ago, and that she went in fear of her life from him. The inspector informed his worship that the policeman had only been six months in the force. On being asked for the witnesses, she called her husband—a very quiet, inof-

fensive-looking man. He, however, could say nothing to alter the case, although stimulated by a continued torrent of abuse from his wife. His worship, in giving judgment, sentenced her to pay £2 as a fine, and injury to the policeman's coat, or two months' imprisonment, adding, that he thought it would take at least that time to tame her—a jest that, like most other judicial attempts at wit, told immensely with his auditors. I watched the woman as she left the court, and noticed the extreme dexterity with which she protected, by her elbows, the infant against the different angles and projections in the tortuous passages from the dock to the door of the court, although all her attention seemed occupied in scolding her husband for the evidence he had given.

I was fully convinced the poor woman was insane. Had she been drunk, the maternal instincts would have been lost; but before speaking to the magistrate on the subject, I determined to question the policeman as to her behaviour since she had been in confinement, but I was obliged to delay the enquiry, as my own was the next case called for.

It detained the time of the court but for a few minutes. It appeared that the police arrested the prisoner, whose person was well known to them, on the evening of the day after the robbery, as he was entering the shop of a well-known receiver of stolen goods, and my handkerchief, as well as four others differently marked, were found upon him. I easily identified him, especially as he was in the same suit of clothes he wore the day he committed the theft. On being called on for his defence he admitted his guilt in my case. With respect to the other handkerchiefs, they had been given him by a young person he knew. She had now left her place, and he did not know where to find her. He stole my handkerchief from distress,



and as it was his first offence he threw himself with confidence on the merciful consideration of the court. The jailor distinctly differed with him in opinion as to its being his first offence, and the magistrate abused his confidence by sentencing him to three months' imprisonment.

As he left the dock he looked at me, but without the slightest expression of resentment or anger ; and I must confess, that while admitting the propriety of the magistrate's decision, I regretted having appeared against him.

On leaving the court, I asked the policeman if the woman was really intoxicated when he took her into custody on the Saturday evening. He told me she had certainly been drinking, but at the same time she appeared to him more mad than drunk.

"What has she taken," I said, "since she has been in confinement ?"

"Nothing, Sir, but coffee and bread and butter."

"Has her child been with her, and did she attend to it properly ?"

"Yes, Sir, she is suckling the child, and she washed it very carefully ; she attends to it kindly, and appears to keep it very clean."

I was more than ever convinced of the poor creature's insanity, and determined speaking to the magistrate on the subject, when, to my great surprise, I heard she was no longer in custody. The policeman told me that a number of Irish residing in the same court had been waiting outside the police-office during the time the case was being heard, and they had made a subscription among themselves to pay the fine ; all they could muster, however, amounted to only thirty-three shillings, and they seemed almost in despair about it, when Sullivan himself advanced the remaining seven shillings, and the woman was liberated.

On leaving the court I perceived a group of the very poorest Irish, the man and his wife in the midst, all talking at the same moment, and obstructing the foot-way ; utterly regardless of the request of the policeman to move on, and keep the way clear. At a short distance, leaning against a post, was Sullivan himself.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHILD AT NURSE—THE WET NURSE—FATE OF HER  
 INFANT—THE OLD WOMAN AND HER GRANDSON—THE  
 OLD MAN AND HIS GRANDDAUGHTER—THE MECHANIC'S  
 WIDOW AND HER TWO CHILDREN.

THE next morning was one set apart for vaccination, and Morton was now sufficiently recovered to assist in the duty. The whole number vaccinated was fourteen. After the last had gone, a poor woman brought an infant for his opinion on the state of its health, which she considered got worse, and the child itself weaker, daily. It was wretchedly emaciated, with apparently no vital power. Medicine was evidently of no use; and Morton told the woman the fact so undisguisedly, that I saw plainly she was not the infant's mother.

"I am very sorry for it," said she, "not only for the poor baby's sake, but it's a great assistance to us as well."

"Will his father feel its loss much?" said Morton.

"No, Sir; I don't think he will," said the woman; "he is so ill himself that he seems to take but little interest in anything, poor fellow!"

"Well," said Morton, "I am sorry to say I can do nothing more for it."

And the woman left the surgery.

"There goes," continued Morton, "another victim offered up to Mammon."

"What is it?" I asked.

"Only a child at dry-nurse following the usual course; and perhaps better for the poor infant after all. If it lived its constitution would most probably be

worthless, and it would lead a life of misery. I am sorry for it, though ; for I felt some interest in the parents. About two months since, Dr. S—— told me he wanted a wet-nurse for a patient of his who had not sufficient milk for her own child ; and, as he was not able to leave the neighbourhood of his own house, being in momentary expectation of being called to attend some woman of quality, he requested me, as a favour, to get one for him from the Lying-in Hospital. I was to send her down to his patient's house in Berkshire as quickly as possible ; but it was expressly stipulated she should be a married woman. Well, to oblige S——, I went ; but with no very goodwill, for I have always the impression over me that I am about to take some poor infant's life, by depriving it, not only of its proper nutriment, but its mother's care as well. By the bye, did you ever attend at that hospital to get a wet-nurse ?”

“No : I have been so short a time in England that I did not even know of it.”

“Well, then, I will tell you how it is done, or you may form an idea by my relating what took place when I engaged that infant's mother. On arriving at the building, I noticed a debilitated-looking young man, with a mild and somewhat sorrowful expression of countenance, talking very earnestly to a most respectable-looking young woman with an infant under her shawl. They both looked inquiringly at me as I ascended the steps, and I thus had a full view of both. On explaining my errand, and stating that I was a medical man, I was shown into the matron's room. It was a large, well-furnished apartment, fitted up not only with comfort, but with many of the luxuries of life. After waiting a few minutes, a stout, well-dressed middle-aged woman entered the room, and, with great volubility, informed me that “she was not the matron ; that the matron had gone into the country for a

holiday, and that she did her duty in the interim. The matron's fee, she said, was half-a-guinea. Some gentlemen seemed to consider it too much ; but then they had several nurses with very fine babies always ready to be seen, and that was not only a great convenience to gentlemen whose time was valuable, but often an economy as well." I paid her the money ; and, as she began to annoy me, I asked her to let me see some of those at present in the house. "She said I was fortunate ; as there were several excellent nurses ready, and she would bring them in one at a time, so that I could judge at my leisure the one that suited me the best. She always made them bring their babies with them, so that gentlemen could better judge of the fattening quality of the milk." I thought for a moment on the effect of depriving the fattened baby of such nourishment, and feeding it on diluted London milk, at the house of a woman who made a profit on an allowance of four shillings a week for food and attendance ; but I kept my thoughts to myself. I did not consider the presence of the nurse's baby any test, as I knew perfectly well how easy it is for them to borrow another's infant for the occasion ; but I made no objection to the proposition, and she immediately called in one of the women from an adjoining room. The first that made her appearance was a remarkably fine, healthy-looking young woman ; she showed her infant with a certain mixture of pride and shame on her countenance. A finer child it was impossible to see ; but, as I suspected, she was incapacitated, from the fact of her being an unmarried woman. The next told me she was a married woman ; that her husband was in the Guards, and she was obliged to work hard for her livelihood. "She generally went out by the day, cooking ; but she could not do so with her infant. Her husband, of course, could not support her out of his pay ; so he consented to her taking a wet-nurse's place." I asked

to see her hands. From their fine texture, and the appearance of her nails, I perceived that she was telling me a falsehood, and that she had never been accustomed to labour, so I asked her no further questions. Several others presented themselves ; but some were too weak, some appeared consumptive, others had evidently suffered great privation, and several were unmarried. I noticed that the healthiest were the unmarried ; those who appeared to have suffered from privation were invariably married. All the poor creatures submitted to the derogatory but necessary examination performed by or under the direction of the woman herself, and with that anxious, submissive, half-frightened air that we read is remarked at the slave sales in America. It was curious to notice the different manner and feeling these poor creatures showed when their infants were examined. Some exhibited them with evident pride ; others, whose amount of nourishment had evidently been insufficient, offering the usual excuse, 'that baby had not been very well lately, but generally it was a remarkably fine child.' As regarded the children, fine or sickly made but little difference : the same fate was in store for nine out of ten of them. The last that made her appearance was the woman I had seen in the street as I entered. She was a clear-skinned, cleanly, amiable-looking young woman. Her baby was a fine-grown child, healthy, and very clean. 'Her husband, she said, was a tailor, but lately he had not been very well.' Here she stopped herself. 'Business,' she continued, 'had been very slack lately, and he had been thrown out of work ; so he thought it would be better for her to take a situation as wet-nurse in a gentleman's family till things took a turn. Not that, up to the present time, they had suffered any want ; she had had plenty of everything, thank God !' This was evidently false ; and the poor woman's blush, as I looked in her face, proved it. I told her she would be obliged to live

in the country, and she would not be allowed to see her husband. She asked if she might have her own baby at nurse in the neighbourhood. This, I said, was impossible : she must be content to leave her child in London if she took the situation. She was silent for some time, evidently making up her mind, and rocking the baby at the same time. After a few moments, she looked at her child with an expression of intense affection. Her eyes at last filled with tears, and hid her baby from her. She then consented to the terms, and the bargain for the child's life was completed."

"The system is very horrible, no doubt," I said.

"Horrible, indeed," said Morton ; "and inexcusable as well. The old system of the foster-child is now utterly departed from. Formerly, a hired nurse was allowed to suckle her own child as well as her fosterling ; but now, not only is she obliged to relinquish her own, but, in many cases, is positively prohibited from seeing it. The physical capability of increasing the milk of a healthy woman is a far less difficult matter than to find a substitute for that milk for her own child. Nothing can be more cruel and degrading than the system of the present day. Not only is she obliged to stifle her affection for her own child, but in most cases, especially in families of distinction, she is strictly prohibited from forming an attachment to the child she nurses. Nothing is more frequent than to prohibit them from even kissing the child she has at the breast. They are kept solely as domestic animals, for the nourishment they yield ; called when they are wanted for that purpose, and ordered to relinquish the child to another as soon as its meal is over. It would be impossible in animated nature to find a system as degraded as this effect of our civilization. A hen that has hatched some ducks' eggs is allowed the privilege of nursing them during their pupillage ; a cat that has suckled a litter of puppies is not prohibited from caress-

ing them ; but woman, the noblest specimen of God's creation, is prohibited from showing to her nursling a sympathy permitted to the brute creation. We hear a vast amount of complaint of our great social evil, and with great justice ; but I deny there can exist any prostitution of the body more infamous than that permitted and encouraged by the present system of wet-nursing infants."

"Is it not singular," I remarked, "that, with the strong maternal feeling in most English women, they allow a system of the kind ?"

"It is certainly singular ; but it is a proof how easily pride and selfishness can find an excuse if they have money to pay for it. This system certainly takes its rise with the aristocratic and wealthy. A woman, or lady if you like, is incapable, or too lazy, to suckle her child. At first, they generally do object to resign it to another ; but selfishness or laziness still counsels them, and they apply for medical advice, on the subject. A little obscene scientific twaddle from the courtly physician or fashionable practitioner proves to them how beneficial it would be for the welfare of their own children. Their caprice is indulged, their laziness is absolved by the medical opinion, and the system is continued. Of course, the servility of the middle classes induces them to adopt, to a great extent, an example set by those above them. But, to their credit be it said, it is far more rare among them than with the higher orders."

"The mortality arising from such a system must be immense," I remarked.

"I believe it to be so great that the question dare not be investigated, and all parties are interested in keeping it silent. As an example of the system, let us take that poor infant and its mother. She is well-fed, well-clothed, and tolerably well-paid, according to the present market price for infant life. Her husband



is dying here in London from consumption. Every farthing the poor creature earns is sent up. A portion assists the husband, and the remainder goes towards the maintenance of the child. The sum paid is utterly insufficient to compensate any one for the amount of labour and attention a child brought up by hand requires, without taking into consideration the cost of food and clothing. The child gradually languishes and dies. Let us contrast the position of the two infants. One, ruddy, healthy, and lively, increases in strength and beauty daily; the other, sickly and uncared for, is sinking rapidly. That young smiling cherub, that is brought forward with so much pride in the rich man's family, for the admiration and caresses of their friends, is in reality a young vampire, whose flesh is obtained by sucking the life's blood of the poor man's child. Carry the picture further, and nothing is more probable than, when full of health and beauty, it clings to its nurse's breast, and, fully satiated, loosing its hold, its whole features smiling archly in the poor creature's face, her own infant, at the same moment, is expiring from protracted want and neglect in some wretched hovel in the metropolis. I do not know what may be the price of an infant at the breast in the slave states of America; but, if your own wife be sickly, or, what as frequently happens, lazy, you may buy in London the life of another woman's child to feed your own for from sixty to eighty dollars American currency, and have a large majority of Exeter Hall to approve of the transaction."

"But is not the medical profession greatly to blame in the affair?"

"Most certainly it is. The facility with which the practitioners in fashionable neighbourhoods lend themselves to the system is a disgrace to the whole profession. But here comes an exception to the rule. I will give you the history when the woman is gone."

As he spoke, a common-looking old woman, with a

good-humoured expression of countenance, entered the surgery. She had with her a healthy-looking child, about two years and a half old. The old woman was by no means cleanly in her person ; the child, however, was unexceptionable in that respect, and was not only comfortably dressed, but had, moreover, an absurd attempt at finery in the shape of an old feather in its cap.

"Well, Mrs. Carr, what is the matter with you this morning?" said Morton ; "the child, I see, is well enough."

"Little's the matter with me, Sir," she said, with a slight Irish accent, "but hunger, and that I'm getting used to now ; but the poor child will die, and that I'm sure of, if you don't befriend us."

"How can I help you?" enquired Morton.

"Well, now, what I'm saying to you is God's truth : the last meal I could afford to pay for I eat this morning, and where to get another I don't know."

"Why don't you go into the house, then?"

"What ! and leave my child ? Sure it would kill me outright to be separated from him, the darling ! and he'd die himself, he's so delicate."

"Nonsense," said Morton, "the child is as strong as a young calf. Many a rich man would give his weight in gold to have his own son with your boy's constitution."

"That I'm sure of, the beauty he is (he was exceedingly ugly and common-looking) ; but they wouldn't have him for ten times his weight in gold or diamonds either."

"But if you will go into the house, I will speak to the guardians to appoint you as nurse, or something of the kind, in the same ward, so that you would be with him ; and, at the same time, be able to make yourself useful. I could recommend you with a clear conscience, as you are certainly very kind to children."

"Nothing I'd like better," said the old woman ;  
"but you forget, doctor, this is not the baby's parish."

"Where is his parish ?"

"Chelsea, Sir."

"Did your daughter live in Chelsea ?" said Morton,  
in a tone of surprise.

"No. She was in place in Eaton Square ; but they  
turned her out of that parish before the baby was born,  
so the dear belongs to Chelsea."

"Why don't you go to Chelsea and get them to take  
you in there ?"

"Because they will say that my parish is in the  
Borough, and they've poor enough of their own to  
provide for ; so I can't get into the house at all unless  
I give up my darling altogether."

Here the poor creature wept plentifully.

Now, there is hardly a more touching sight than to  
see an old woman crying ; and Morton, as well as  
myself, evidently sympathised with her.

"Well," said Morton, "to make you quit the child,  
I own, would be a pity, Mrs. Carr, although you give  
a great deal of trouble. To assist you I will try and  
get you a shilling a week and a loaf from the parish,  
and then you must get on the best way you can."

"May God bless you, Sir !" said she, "I dare say I  
can manage then ; and it's not long I'll be a burden to  
the parish. Next mail I'll have a letter from my  
daughter in America with money in it, and then I'll be  
beholden to nobody."

"Next week, did you say ?" inquired Morton, look-  
ing slyly at me.

"Next week, for certain ; that is to say, if the mail  
comes in then, and I believe it does—don't it, Sir ?"  
said she.

"From what part of America do you expect your  
daughter's letter ? I must know that before I can  
answer your question."

"Well, that's the only thing I'm not certain of," said the old woman. "I don't exactly know where she is, but she knows where I am, and that's exactly the same thing."

"But I think," said Morton, "that you had better not promise anybody money without more certainty of being able to pay it than that of receiving it from your daughter. Remember how often you have been disappointed already."

"Do you mean to say my girl would let her old mother and this beautiful boy starve?" she replied, angrily. "You don't know her, doctor, or you wouldn't say it. There isn't a better-hearted girl in the world, that there isn't, though I say it myself."

"But still I say you have been disappointed before and may be again, so don't get into debt with the promise of paying next week, as you may not be able to keep your word. But you must go now," he continued, "for I am busy. I will see the relieving officer to-day."

The old woman took the child in her arms; and, without thanking Morton, walked indignantly out of the surgery.

"That," said Morton, "is an instance of the wet-nurse's child escaping. The old woman's daughter was housemaid in a gentleman's family at the west end of the town. She was a very fine-looking girl certainly, and the only child of her mother. She was taken into the family a year or two before the old woman left it—who, by the bye, was an excellent cook in her time. During the time her mother was with her, she behaved with great propriety; but, when old age and other infirmities—of which I am afraid that drink formed a considerable portion—compelled the old lady to leave, the behaviour of the daughter suffered a great change for the worse. No followers were, of course, allowed; but the house was somewhat noted for the remarkably

smart-looking footmen it employed. The frequent result followed. The poor girl was dismissed ; and, shortly afterwards, became a mother—she being confined, as the mother says, in the parish of Chelsea.

—Here, again, is a specimen of our infamous poor-laws. The old woman—who had been twenty years in the family, whose residence was in the enormously wealthy parish of St. George's, Hanover Square—her best years expended in the service of the rich, is now, when she is old and helpless, thrown on our poor parish for relief ; and the daughter has the penalty of her fault levied on Chelsea, a district particularly visited by inflictions of that description, while the parish in which the fault was committed is exonerated from the consequences."

"Shall you have any trouble in getting her relieved ?" I enquired.

—"Not the slightest. The guardians are in reality a most humane body of men. It is simply a dodge to make some other parish take her if they can ; for we are so poor, every shilling must be economised to the utmost. But," he continued, "I cannot help liking the old woman, after all. Nothing can make her desert that child. Her own daughter, a worthless creature, after leaving her situation, went, as her mother is informed, to America. Of this there is not the slightest shadow of proof ; she has, in my opinion, deserted both her child and her mother. The old woman received the baby from its birth, and paid it that unremitting attention that alone can give an infant brought up by hand the slightest chance of surviving. For this she has never received a farthing. How she has contrived to exist, Heaven only knows. Often she has been in the utmost distress, but still that child has been cared for, and she had still the same faith in the affection of her daughter. Once the rector, a most humane man, got some charitable person to advance her ten shillings for clothes

for herself and child, although I believe the statement he made was a slander on his own personal charity. The child came out comfortably dressed, and the feather you saw was part of the investment. Half-a-crown of it was retained by her, as a floating capital for a mercantile speculation. The woman at whose house she lodged agreed to let her have part of a little window on the ground floor, for the sale of some common sweetmeats. Immediately afterwards, it became decorated with some showy specimens of different preparations of sweetened lime, made still more indigestible by being coloured by various bright metallic pigments. Some, more refined than the rest, were enveloped in party-coloured paper, and had thus not only the advantage of stimulating juvenile curiosity, but also hid from the eye of the dyspeptic the filthy composition they contained. The speculation, however, was a failure. Not only did it require a continued attendance at home, but the young glutton, her grandson, having once tasted the delicacies, was incessantly requiring them, and the grandmother not having sufficient courage to refuse him, not only was the colour, freshness, and beauty of a large portion of them lost before her young customers applied for them, but occasionally most unpleasant and deprecatory remarks were made as to the quality of her wares. At last an occurrence took place that induced her to give up all attempts to maintain herself by the confectionary trade. She had one morning been to the wholesale house, and invested sixpence in a curious delicacy, that had apparently great charms in the eyes of the young. It was about the size of large peas, and its principal ingredient evidently chalk. Great pains had been taken to render the exterior pleasing to the eye. They had the appearance in miniature of what bricklayers call rough cast; and the whole was rendered more attractive by a colour in which some common salt of

copper evidently predominated. Arrived at home, she placed her purchase on the table, and being obliged to leave the house for a short period, her grandson profited by the opportunity her absence afforded him, and contrived, by some means, to pull down her purchase on the floor. The paper burst by the fall, and the young sybarite regaled himself to such a suicidal extent with the contents, that I had great difficulty in keeping him on this side of the grave. From that time I believe the young urchin has never been out of her sight, and is, therefore, no small impediment in the way of her getting her own living. If she obtains a commission to clean a house, his presence is generally objected to by the owner. If she is employed to take care of an empty one, the marks of the urchin's hands upon the walls deprive her of another opportunity. One remark that has been made would be most ludicrous, were it not for the beauty of the sentiment occasioning it. As the weather becomes colder, the child, who is then never allowed to walk, lest he might get cold in his feet, increases his drapery with the lowered temperature, and the old woman appears lighter clad. When the weather is very severe, the urchin looks like a bundle of female clothing in her arms, and the poor creature herself appears shivering in a dress that is at least as necessary for decency as warmth. As the weather opens, and the sun becomes more powerful, the clothing of the child becomes lighter, and the old woman's warmer, till, in the full tide of summer, she is appropriately dressed as well as the child itself. But perhaps the most remarkable circumstance in a psychological point of view, is the irremovable persuasion that her daughter is making money by her labour in America for the support of her child. Every mail that she hears has arrived, and brought no letter, confirms her in the certitude that the next will bring it. Occasionally she writes to her daughter, addressing her letters

to the post-office of some town in America where she thinks her daughter may possibly be residing, informing her that her letter had not come to hand. The excuses she forms in her own brain for the non-arrival of her daughter's letters are most curious. Sometimes she is convinced that a letter containing a ten-pound note had been sent by private hand, and that the bearer, being aware of its contents, had been dishonest, and had stolen it. A letter, emanating from this idea, was sent to America, requesting her daughter to send the next by the post, as it was not right to put temptation in the way of any one. Another excuse was, that her daughter had spent a portion of the money in clothes for them, and that they had been detained at the custom-house. 'She had heard these things often occurred, and a great shame it was, too.' At last, when her stock of excuses was getting exhausted, she heard that a vessel and all hands had been lost coming from America. This terrible misfortune to others was a great relief to her. She was certain that her daughter's letter and another bundle of clothes had been lost in that ship. Many letters have since been sent to different towns in America, informing her daughter of the disaster; and now, as you hear, she is certain of receiving the money next week. The poor creature is, I believe, a pious Catholic; but I think it would be as easy to shake her faith in the Virgin Mary herself as in the maternal and filial attributes of her daughter. One day, when endeavouring to show her that she might be disappointed of the money next week, I asked her what reason she had for believing that her daughter was working for them as assiduously as she stated, seeing she had not heard one word from her since she left. The old woman answered me, with a dignity and conviction that made me ashamed of my own remark, 'Don't I know, from my own feelings, that it would be impos-



sible for me not to work for my child; and what greater proof do I want that my child is working for hers ?

"What a beautiful fact it is," I said, "that man alone, of all animated nature, is capable of carrying the parental affection even to the second generation, raising himself by it to such an immense superiority over the brute creation, whose family affection is extinguished as soon as instinct teaches them that their young are capable of defending and supporting themselves !"

"It is a fact," said Morton, "not sufficiently dwelt upon by theologists ; it is one of the greatest blessings that the Almighty has conferred upon the poor—perhaps the only one that cannot be attacked by the infidel. Even the instinct of maternity, being confirmed by habit, is not an objection, for it is as strong in man as in woman, though it develops itself in a different manner. I had a case in proof a few years since. I was then parish surgeon, and the man died under my care in the work-house. He had been some years in the parish—long enough, in fact, to gain a legal settlement ; but where he came from, or what had been his previous history, no one knew. In appearance he was tall, thin, and stooped considerably. His dress—and the same suit of clothes lasted him all the time he resided among us—was a shabby, threadbare black, but still with some appearance of former respectability about it. His hat, it would be impossible to describe ; my reason for mentioning it is, that the same black crape that was on it when he came among us, remained there till he died. By the action of time and rain, it had become quite brown, and at last its shape was that of a roll round the brim. He brought with him a little girl about two years of age, whom he said was his granddaughter. He took a back room in some wretched court, and maintained himself and the child by selling water-cresses.

He was about the streets the greater part of the day, and the child was cared for by the women of the house. The poor man's earthly happiness centered in that girl. Not that he appeared to caress her much, but the continued anxiety he showed in the questions he put to the woman with whom she principally remained, not only established the fact of his intense affection, but raised him greatly in their opinion. On every other subject he was exceedingly taciturn. He occasionally suffered severely from asthma, and the attacks becoming more severe, as well as more frequent, his circumstances became still worse. He fell from the position of a dealer in water-cresses to a hawker of chickweed for singing-birds—his disease not permitting him to attend, in the cold of the early morning, to purchase his supply of cresses for his day's sale. This occurred when his grandchild was between six and seven years of age. Whether the diminished profits on the chickweed obliged them to fare badly, or whether the girl caught, from the vitiated atmosphere in which she was compelled to live, a low fever, I know not, but I was obliged to get her removed for that disease to the Westminster Hospital. The poor man carried her there himself, and she was admitted as a patient. On each visiting day, as soon as the clock struck two—the hour of admission for the patients' friends—the old man made his appearance. The child would smile at him when he entered, and he would answer her with another. He would then seat himself beside her bed, with his face towards the head, and gaze at her sadly and unceasingly. Neither said a word. On leaving the first day, the porter informed him he should not come in such a dirty condition; he was miserably poverty-stricken and wretched in his appearance it is true. He looked at the porter enquiringly, and the remark was repeated. The next day he came as usual; his face and hands were certainly cleaner, in other respects he was the same. He sat himself down in the same

position, and took from his breast a child's book, with birds painted in it in a coarse, gaudy manner, and, with a look of something like triumph, opened it before her. She smiled, and was evidently much pleased. She turned over the leaves, but before they were ended she closed the book, and laid back on her pillow. The child that day was evidently worse. The self-satisfied smile of the old man vanished, and he never smiled afterwards. At his next visit the child was delirious, and typhus, in its worst form, had set in. He still seated himself in the same place, his knees apart, and his clasped hands between them. No expression of countenance betrayed his feelings. Occasionally he would raise his clasped hands up and down with great rapidity for a few seconds, and was then still again. At last the child died, and the same day the man entered the house. I found his disease had been aggravated considerably during the last few days of his grandchild's illness. It appeared he had spent each night in St. James's Park, and having by some means made friends with the night porter, he came every hour as the clock struck to enquire after her. I found him in bed, his breathing short and difficult. I gave him some medicine, and the immediate acuteness left him, but he never rallied. He lay without uttering a complaint, did what he was told, if he had the strength, and took thankfully what was given to him. All, however, was of no avail ; he gradually sank, and, in a week after his grandchild's death, the old man had followed her."

I was obliged to break off the conversation to make my round of visits to my patients. In the course of the day I met with a remarkable instance, not only of the kind feeling existing among the poor to each other, but also a proof that a member of their body may have his status in their society improved by misfortune. On passing near the court where the poor labourer lived whose fate I have already recorded, I determined upon visiting

the widow, for the purpose of informing her of the improved health of her son in the hospital, and of the possibility of my being able to find a situation for him as soon as he should be sufficiently recovered to return to work. The onus of finding him occupation I had taken upon myself. Morton, whose forebodings respecting the family had been, I am happy to say, utterly fallacious, had been promised, through the intervention of his friend the curate, a situation for the girl in a respectable tradesman's family ; and I was resolved, if possible, to put the son in a respectable position as well. The widow, thanks to the kindness of her friends, gained enough by the sale of fruit in the streets to supply their small wants : and, up to the present moment, the infant had not suffered from its exposure to the vicissitudes of the weather, and so far from being an impediment to its mother, it rather tended to increase the sale of her goods ; the widow's cap, and the infant together, frequently determining a customer to purchase, that would have most probably withstood the temptations of her stock-in-trade without them.

Before turning into the court, my attention was attracted by a brawl between two wretched women, whose language, without the further proof of their personal appearance, was sufficient to stamp their position in the world. They were close to the entrance of the court, and it was necessary that I should pass close by them to enter it. When near them, one of these furies suddenly broke off the screaming abuse she was uttering, and rapidly rushed away from the other. She continued running up the street for the space of forty or fifty yards, then stooping down, caught up from the centre of the road a child, of apparently five or six years of age. Having placed it on the pathway, and taken it by the hand, she walked rapidly with it along the pavement towards the entrance of the court. As they approached, I noticed that the child was blind,

and had a peculiar idiotic look with it. As she passed her antagonist, she requested her, in no polite phraseology, to wait till she returned. I entered the court, she following me, and screaming, at the top of her voice, "Mrs. Jones! Mrs. Jones! here's your boy." A decent-looking poor woman came from a house at the end of the court, and thanking the woman for her trouble, took the child by the hand and led it into the house; and the virago returned to conclude her quarrel. I fortunately found the widow at home, and was much pleased, not only at a greater amount of apparent comfort in her room, but also an attempt at cleanliness and housewifery that pleased me exceedingly. She warmly expressed her gratitude at the trouble I had taken; and, on my leaving, accompanied me down stairs to the door. Here I found another circumstance that attracted my attention. During my visit, a costermonger had entered the court with a long flat tray on a sort of wheelbarrow. The whole of its surface was covered with dried herrings, which he was offering at the top of his voice at a very reduced price, saying—little to the praise of his own honesty—that the dealer had sold him, by mistake, a large instead of a small barrel, and he could therefore afford to sell them a great bargain. That he was offering them at a very small price was evidently true; for the housewives of the court—no bad authorities on matters of economy—had crowded round his barrow, and the sale was proceeding rapidly. As I was on the point of wishing the widow good morning, the mother of the blind child left her house, leading her boy by the hand. As she approached the crowd, I noticed the others immediately made room for her. She seemed to accept the civility as one accustomed to a certain amount of deference, and took her stand by the barrow. As she was examining the fish, the other women advised her in her choice, for the moment stopping their own bargains. She was on the point of choosing one that, from its size, promised

to be a very eligible investment, when the costermonger took up another, equally large, and advised her to take it instead, stating his reasons to his audience, which were considered evidently as perfectly convincing. She paid the money and left the barrow, the sale re-commencing with renewed activity. I asked the widow if she knew who she was. She had known her, she said, for several years—in fact, before she came to live in the court—and immediately gave me a sketch of her history; which, from the time the poor woman married, appeared to be one series of those extraordinary visitations of Providence we occasionally meet with in society, especially among the poorer classes.

The poor woman, now a widow, was, before her marriage, in domestic service. During that period nothing is known of her; but judging from her conduct during her married life, her previous career must have been unexceptional. Her husband, at the time of her marriage, was an engineer, and was employed at some extensive works in the neighbourhood. He was an excellent workman, and an industrious, sober, good man. The first year after their wedding passed off without anything to mark it for observation. They had a child during the time, but it died when about twelve months old. This was the commencement of their troubles. Scarcely had their sorrow somewhat subsided when an accident occurred at the works. Her husband was standing by a fellow-workman, who was pouring some molten metal into a mould. By some accident it appears that a small quantity of water had got into it, and a terrible explosion took place. Portions of the hot metal were thrown around, wounding several, and doing a considerable amount of damage. The poor fellow employed in the casting was killed, and her husband so severely wounded in the arm, that immediate amputation was necessary. During his stay in the hospital, his club supported his wife, not only in necessities, but in comfort. On his presenting himself

again at the works, he was appointed a door-keeper, not more from sympathy for his loss than for his previous excellent conduct. At the time of the accident, the wife was again expecting to be a mother; and on the birth of the child, to the inexpressible anguish of both parents, it was found to be blind. Another misfortune revealed itself to Morton, who attended her, the peculiar formation of the skull leaving little doubt of the ultimate idiocy of the child. To the quick eye of the mother this malformation was also apparent; but Morton justly considered that the sad truth would declare itself quite early enough, and so calmed the parents by a fiction which their own wishes helped them to accept as a fact. About the time when the first spark of intelligence is usually perceived in a child, the impatience of the poor parents, and the ingenuity with which they attempted to force every trifling action of their infant's into a development of mind, was painful in the extreme. The pleasure with which the mother would inform her husband, when he returned from the works in the evening, "that baby had certainly noticed her voice in the day, and more than once too. That she was convinced that his backwardness arose solely from the loss of his sight. She was sure that if the sight was lost, all the other senses would be more intelligent; she had always heard every doctor say so; and if Mr. Morton was asked, she was sure he would say the same thing." The poor thing was hoping against hope. Often as she determined to question Morton on the subject, as often was the terror of his answer before her, and the question was delayed, till the sad truth was but too clear to them both—the child was an idiot. There was now the cause to be sought for; and the accident to her husband's arm during that susceptible phase in her own health was ascribed as the reason by the gossips in the court; and their decision was most readily confirmed by Morton, who, with equal readiness, would have

ascribed it to any other cause that might have afforded her any consolation.

The next year passed off without anything to note ; her husband still retained his appointment, and she attended to her unfortunate child with unremitting care and affection. But the poor woman's misery was far from complete. The next year she was again confined of a boy, and nothing appeared to mar the satisfaction of the parents. The baby was well-formed and healthy ; and this was considered by her female friends as an additional confirmation of their opinion that the father's accident was the cause of the first child's misfortune. About the same time the health of the husband became very uncertain ; he was frequently obliged to leave his post in the course of the day. He became gradually thinner and weaker, and was at last obliged to apply to Morton for advice, he being the medical man of his club. The case was diabetes in its worst form ; and a sentence of death, without hope of mercy, was concealed in the advice of Morton,—to get some one else to do his duty for him for a week or two, that his wife might nurse him at home. It would be impossible to exaggerate the description of the affection and attention that poor woman bestowed on her husband, all the more astonishing from the incessant care her two helpless children required. But another source of misery was threatening the poor creature : the baby was now some months old ; it could notice its mother with a smile, and stretch its hands towards her if another took it, but still seemed utterly indifferent to her voice. She first noticed it when the child was lying quietly on the bed awake, with its back towards her—it seemed utterly unconscious of her voice, but the moment she caught its eye, the recognition of the infant was perfect. It seemed to her, also, that no attempt at articulated sound came from its lips, although it had now arrived at that age when the lips of the infant first attempt to imitate the voice. She brought



the child to Morton for his advice, without even informing her husband of her suspicions. Dreading his decision, yet anxious for his opinion, she commenced by calling his attention to some trifling ailment she thought it had got. This was soon negatived. She then began by asking his opinion of the child, and didn't he think it was a very healthy baby? Here her eye was fixed with intense anxiety on Morton, although she attempted to put the question as one of those ordinary remarks that mothers are so fond of making to their medical attendant. Morton tried to evade the question; he had already grave suspicions on the subject, but the mother put it a second time more seriously. He then acknowledged that the child was deaf, but that perhaps it arose only from weakness, and might go off as the child got strength, and that its difficulty in articulation arose from that cause. The poor woman left him in a most dejected condition. The almost certainty of her child being deaf and dumb was now to be added to her other afflictions; but not one word of her interview with Mr. Morton was mentioned at home. Her husband still lingered on. Irritable from disease, he was at times exceedingly fractious; still not a murmur of impatience escaped his wife. If possible her manner to him had increased in attention; for another element entered evidently into her behaviour—a feeling that every woman can understand yet none explain; a feeling that few men, but those of the medical profession who have made the mind their study have analysed—the sentiment of inferiority in the woman to the man, caused by the congenital afflictions of her children. Her demeanour to her husband was now not that of simply the affectionate and attached wife, it had combined with it the respect and submission of the faithful and patient inferior—as if trying, by her excess of love and respect, to qualify the misfortune that through her had fallen on their offspring. It was some weeks before death relieved the husband from his

sufferings, and the wife from a continued amount of fatigue that not even the exigency of the circumstances could have maintained.

After his death, her prospect in the world was bleak and cheerless in the extreme ; with two helpless children dependent on her for support, and she with the inflexible determination to keep by those whose very existence was to be maintained by her exertions. Without a friend in the world from whom she had the right to ask for a shilling, it required no small amount of courage to look to the future. But that God that tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, had not forgotten one whose amiable and submissive resignation to His will, proved so clearly her faith in His divinity. His first gift was the power to the mind for the duties it had to perform. The painful, continued, and fatiguing attention to these helpless creatures was made by Him a task so pleasing, that it would have been utter cruelty in man to have deprived her of either, even with the power and intention of benefiting them by so doing. To the crude and unformed minds of the children He gave an instructress so kind, so gentle, that His own beneficent nature was understood by them, though they knew Him not even by name. Friends sprang up where least she had expected to find them. The never-tiring rector had called on her, and both she and her children appeared soon afterwards in respectable mourning. The proprietors of the works allowed her half-a-crown a week, and a subscription, headed by the principal partner himself, was made in the workshop for her benefit. The washing of many of the single men was obtained for her. Her furniture was her own, and the landlord remitted the small amount of arrears owing for rent. But one of the most singular effects of her misfortune is the evident superiority it gives her over the other women in the court. No one ever jokes with her, and every one addresses her with consideration and respect. In the housewifery squabbles

of the community she has no part. The postman, when he sees her, invariably remarks on the state of the weather. The policeman, when he enters the court, relaxes his usual dignified behaviour to children, and pats hers on the cheek if he sees the poor creatures at the door. The owner of the general shop makes her almost half a bow as he thanks her for the purchase of half a pound of sugar and a quarter of an ounce of tea; and even the inspector of nuisances—no unfrequent visitor in the locality—has been known to explain in a most conciliatory manner the necessity of the orders he had given, in a very authoritative tone, to the inhabitants of the court generally.

## CHAPTER IX.

A CASE OF DELIRIUM TREMENS—THE OLD WOMAN AND HER TWO SONS—THE DRUNKARD'S EXECUTORS—HISTORY OF A RETURNED CONVICT.

THE most disagreeable case I had was one of delirium tremens. The patient was not only, as his disease proved, a drunkard, but, to all appearances, a man of infamous character besides. The house he lived in was considerably better than those inhabited by the poorer classes generally ; but was situated in a neighbourhood of very bad repute. Several marine store shops were in the immediate vicinity, as well as many infamous houses ; and, night and day, policemen were to be seen always on duty within a short distance of each other. The entrance of the man's house was excessively dirty ; and, although the quality of the furniture was originally of a superior description, it was now torn and dilapidated. I could never clearly understand whether there were any other lodgers in it, or whether my patient was the sole tenant ; but I never visited him without seeing some fresh face, male or female, and never saw the same face twice, with the exception of a wretchedly-dressed and evidently drunken old woman, that waited on him. One peculiarity appeared common to all the other inmates—an evident desire to shun being seen ; although, from their appearance, bashfulness was not among the number of their faults. If I entered his room, and any others were in it, they immediately left ; and, during the week or ten days that I attended the sick man, I did not exchange a word with any other individual in it than the sick man and his nurse. I had several times heard male voices in subdued conversation, and

occasionally female. From the glimpses I had caught of the latter, they were generally middle-aged and remarkably repulsive in appearance. One inmate that I had noticed with particular aversion—and, from the expression of his one eye as I entered, I believe he beheld me with as little affection—was an enormous and ferocious-looking bull-dog. The attention of the old woman to the sick man formed a singular contrast to the kindness the poor generally show to each other when on a bed of sickness. Her nursing was slovenly, her manner indifferent, and the oaths the sick man used when speaking of her showed there was little affection between them. To me she was most civil; and, indeed, pretended, in my presence, to take a great interest in her patient, invariably speaking of him with excessive sympathy; but, as there is little difficulty in the medical man discovering the qualifications of the nurse, I was not deceived by her manner. From the state the patient was in, I was obliged to order brandy in considerable doses; but I am persuaded that the dose alone that he swallowed in my presence was all that he received of the quantity I prescribed.

One evening, on leaving the house, a tall, attenuated woman, miserably clad, stopped me, and asked how my patient got on. As I suspected she had been drinking, I merely answered, "He is very ill," and I walked rapidly on.

"Do you think he will recover?" said she, keeping up with me.

"I hope so; but it is impossible for me to say."

"You hope so!" said the woman; "is it possible any one can hope so? I hope," she continued, "that he will die before morning."

And she concluded by wishing his soul such a fate after death that it would, perhaps, be blasphemous to repeat.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," I said, "to speak in such a manner. I cannot believe you mean it."

"But I do, though," said the woman ; "and if you were in my place I don't believe you would be a bit better."

"No treatment can justify such a wish as you uttered."

"No ! I tell you," said she, "if you had been treated as I have been, you would poison him with the next medicine you gave him. It's all very well for you to talk to me ; but you have had no provocation."

Although the woman had been drinking, she was not tipsy ; and she continued walking by my side, and talking rapidly all the time, giving me a sketch of her connection with the sick man Dawson, and the cause of her terrible and natural animosity against him. She was the widow of a pensioner, who had left her with two boys. They were brought up respectably, and were both industrious. One, the youngest, was employed in an attorney's office ; the other at a silversmith and watchmaker's in the city. One Sunday evening, she met the youngest in company with Dawson, who appeared to be a remarkably straightforward, plausible man. The acquaintance had commenced at the office of her son's employer, whom Dawson had engaged to defend, as he said, a poor fellow unjustly accused of robbing his master. Dawson accompanied them to their lodgings, and stayed there chatting with them for some time. He was evidently an intelligent, well-informed person, had travelled much, and related many curious adventures he had met with in his travels. He succeeded in obtaining the good feeling not only of the mother, but of the other son as well. The intimacy between the boys and Dawson increased, though she saw with some anxiety that not only the regularity of their arrival at home had been broken through, but, on more than one occasion, they did not make their appearance before one or two o'clock in the morning. She mentioned the circumstance to Dawson,

who explained it by saying that he had a friend connected with the Victoria Theatre who frequently gave him orders, and he thought she would have no objection to his occasionally giving her boys, who appeared excellent, hard-working lads, a treat, but that if she objected to it, it should not be repeated. He also informed her that he had taken them to his house after the performance, for the purpose of giving them a little refreshment. The anxiety of the mother was changed to gratitude, and Dawson was a greater favourite than ever. A circumstance occurred, shortly afterwards that again caused her much uneasiness. She had met her eldest son one evening walking with a girl of apparently very doubtful character. She questioned him on the subject, and he answered, with some warmth, that she was a very respectable young woman, and that he had met her at Dawson's. On making enquiries of Dawson, he told her he knew but very little of her, but that her mother was a very excellent woman, and took great care of her daughter, and that he had no doubt, from that fact, that she was a very respectable young woman. This answer, however, did not satisfy the mother, and the result was, that some very strong language passed between her and her son on the subject, who made the dispute a pretence for absenting himself more than ever from the house. Another cause of anxiety arose for the poor woman. Her son at the solicitor's had left his situation without any ostensible cause. On enquiry at the office, she found that, for some weeks past, he had been very inattentive, and had been severely reprimanded for his neglect. This he took in high dudgeon, and left his employment the ensuing Saturday, after receiving his week's money. His repeated absence from home continued; the poor woman's uneasiness increased; but she could not trace this behaviour in any way to Dawson—on the contrary, they were hardly ever seen together. At last, he did not return for two days; and then, in a surly tone, refused to give her any account

of the manner he had employed his time. His elder brother, whose conduct was tolerably regular, was appealed to on the subject ; but he defended the younger, and informed his mother that, if they were able to obtain their own means of subsistence, they ought no longer to be dictated to by her as to the manner they employed their time. The argument of the elder brother for a moment terrified the mother. She thought that, as the younger boy had left his situation, he must be in want of money ; but no application was made to her on the subject. On reflection, she dismissed the thought as unjust to her lad, who had not only been brought up in the paths of honesty, but whose conduct in that respect had hitherto been irreproachable.

The connection of the elder son with the young woman was still continued, greatly to her annoyance. She told her son, if she were a respectable person, he might bring her to the house, and she would receive her in a kind and affectionate manner ; but his angry answer was, that she had too much proper pride to enter a house where her reputation had been once doubted. This unhappy state of things continued for about three months. At last, on his arrival at home one evening, he complained of a violent headache, and went immediately to bed. The next morning he was much better, according to his own statement, but from his haggard countenance and feverish appearance, it was easy to perceive that he had passed a sleepless night. He went as usual to the house of business, and, on his return, told his mother, in an excited manner, that, during the last night, his employer's house had been broken open and robbed of jewellery, watches, and plate to an amount exceeding a thousand pounds in value. At first an undefined feeling of uneasiness came over the mother, but it soon vanished on reflecting on his known integrity ; and this was fortified by the knowledge that, the evening before, he had been obliged to keep his bed, from the severity of his tem-



porary indisposition. She naturally asked many questions respecting the robbery. He was very communicative on the subject, and said there was no doubt of its being effected by a gang of expert burglars ; as the police were unable to detect by what means they had contrived to enter the house. He then enquired after his brother, but nothing had been heard of him. "Oh!" he remarked, seeing a look of anxiety on his mother's countenance, "never mind, he will turn up some day." The next day he went to his duty in the morning, and returned at his usual time in the evening. His first question was whether his brother had returned ; and on being answered in the negative, appeared greatly annoyed. His mother asked if anything had transpired about the robbery. "Nothing," he said ; "but as his employers had offered a reward of fifty pounds, it was most probable they would have some news of it soon. He was very happy to say his master had the fullest confidence in his integrity ; and the police, who were examining others by the hour together, hardly asked him a question, except if he could point out anybody on the premises whom he suspected." Three or four days more passed, and no light was thrown on the transaction ; and the excitement of the first news was beginning to pass over, when, one morning, a respectable-looking man, having the appearance of a substantial tradesman, called at her house, and asked for her son. She told him he was not at home, and she did not expect he would arrive before the evening, as he had gone, as usual, to his business ; if he had any message, she would give it.

"Oh," he said, "it was of no consequence ; where did her son work ?"

"He was employed at a silversmith's, in the city ;" and she gave the address.

"Why!" said he, much surprised, "was not that the house where the great jewellery robbery was committed?"

She told him it was, and a conversation ensued on the subject. He remarked that the ingenuity displayed in these robberies appeared to baffle the police, but it certainly seemed impossible to guess in what manner they were effected. She was equally ignorant on the matter, and lamented that there was so much wickedness in the world. "Had her son said anything to her upon the subject?" "Nothing; she was happy to say her son was a very good young man, and his master was quite sure of his honesty, and that was enough for her."

The stranger looked at her, but his glance seemed changed in a moment. From the frank, good-humoured manner he had been talking with her, and occasionally looking round the room in a careless way, his eyes were fixed on hers with a keenness of expression that, to use her own phraseology, completely shot through her. He said nothing, but continued his gaze. The poor woman, without the power to account for the feeling, knew that some misfortune was pending over her. At that moment a knock was heard at the door; it was a relief to her; she opened it, and in walked a policeman.

"Don't let me alarm you, ma'am," said the first visitor, "but I am a detective officer. I am sorry to say your son is in trouble; both of them, I am afraid. We have a search warrant, and you must accompany us in examining the house."

The order was useless. The poor woman, after a few moments' stupefaction, burst into such a torrent of grief that a detective officer only could withstand. The policeman, evidently moved, attempted to calm her with some common-place phrases of comfort and commiseration; the detective calmly proceeded in his search. On asking the policeman what had transpired, he told her that the day after the robbery a young woman offered a watch as a pledge at a pawnbrokers, with the name of the son's employer upon it as its maker. She was stopped,

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and on being questioned at the police-station, stated that it was given her by a young man to whom she was engaged, and that she had had it in her possession more than a month. This, on inquiry, proved to be true ; but as she was known as a common prostitute, and an associate of thieves of the worst class, the watch was detained. On inquiry of the silver-smith, it was claimed as his property ; it appeared to have been taken from the stock without his missing it. On the girl's being confronted with her son, she stated that she had received the watch from him, and he was arrested for the theft, but there was a strong suspicion that both her sons were implicated in the larger robbery. Somebody had evidently been concealed on the premises, for those cases only were opened that contained valuables, showing a perfect knowledge of the locality. That both had, for some time past, been associated with bad characters, and that the younger boy was wanted at that moment on another charge.

The trial came on, and her eldest boy was transported. The younger shortly after was convicted of a petty theft and imprisoned. On leaving the gaol he committed another robbery, and was again incarcerated. The larger robbery was never discovered ; it was perpetrated, however, by the elder brother admitting the younger into the premises in the day-time, and concealing him. In the night he let in his associates by means planned by his brother, and thus the perfect knowledge the thieves had of the premises was accounted for. That the whole was concocted by Dawson was certain, but so cunningly were his plans arranged, that the thread of continuity was lost, and the manner the goods were disposed of is to this day a mystery.

I asked her what reason she had for thinking that Dawson was at the head of the gang ?

She said that shortly after her son was transported, the girl herself was apprehended on a charge of robbery,

and convicted. About a week afterwards, a respectable looking old woman, in great distress of mind, called on her. She was the mother of the wretched girl. She told her that her daughter was formerly a good honest servant, in a respectable family, but that getting acquainted with a showy young man, an acquaintance of Dawson's, she became so lost to all sense of honesty and propriety as to connive at a robbery in the house of her employer. No suspicion attached to her, but she left her situation shortly afterwards, and had ever since been one of the gang. Her daughter, since her committal, had acknowledged that she was employed to entrap her eldest son ; that he behaved most honestly at the commencement, but by exciting his jealousy by showing him a present of some value she said she had received from another young man his probity gave way, and he abstracted the watch from his master's stock to make it a present to her. Once the knowledge of the theft being known to the gang, his further degradation was certain, and he became implicated in the robbery in the manner described.

"And what am I now?" said she. "A poor, broken-down, gin-drinking old woman, without a being that loves me, without a friend in the world ; my boys are lost, my home is broken up, and the sooner God takes me the better."

The poor woman here left me, and I pursued my way home without returning to the surgery.

The next morning Morton was still in bed when I arrived at his house, and I went on with my visits without seeing him. I called on the man Dawson, and found him much worse than I had left him the evening before. I ordered some stimulants to be given him, and I determined on seeing him again in the evening. I went again between seven and eight o'clock, and saw from the street more light than was usual in his bedroom, and, on approaching the house, heard some voices that appeared to be in violent altercation proceeding

from it. A policeman, to my comfort, was standing near the door, evidently trying to overhear the conversation. I knocked at the door, but nobody answered, and the altercation still continued. I knocked a second time, louder than the first, and after a few minutes the old woman opened it. She was crying bitterly, and was evidently maudlin drunk. I asked her after the patient, but could get no intelligible answer. All I understood from her was, "that after all she had done for him, to be treated in that manner was shameful. She knew I would stand by her and see her righted." Finding I could get nothing from her, I disengaged myself from her clutches—for she had taken hold of the sleeve of my coat—ascended the stairs, and entered the bed-room. By the light of two candles on the table, I perceived there were six persons in the room, four men and two women, engaged in evidently a very angry conversation. The curtain was drawn at the foot of the bed; before it was a table, that, besides the candles, had on it a pewter pot that had certainly contained gin, and some wine glasses. There was also some gold coins, and I thought afterwards I also saw some bank notes, but on the moment after my entering, one of the men turned round, and seeing me, exclaimed in a voice of mingled astonishment and anger, "Who the h— are you?"

The others immediately turned towards me, and although the movement could not have occupied a moment of time, the money and everything, with the exception of the gin, the candles, and glasses, had vanished from the table.

"I am a medical man, and I have come to see Mr. Dawson," I said.

"Then you're not wanted," said the man. "Your job's over; he's dead and gone, and that's enough for you; so the sooner you're off the better."

"No, it is not enough for me," I said, fixing my eyes sternly on his countenance; "I must and will see him before I go."

"Why?" asked another.

"Because I must fill up the certificate of his death, and I will not do so without seeing him."

"What?" said another, in a threatening tone, "do you suspect we've done for him? By G—, I think you had better jump out of the window than suspect anything of the kind!"

I looked at the last speaker, and found his eyes were inflamed with gin, and that he was in a violent passion. The others advanced angrily towards me. I do not know whether I am what is called constitutionally brave, but I have been too much accustomed to danger to be easily alarmed.

"I have nothing to surmise," I said, "on the matter, but I will see him before I go;" I then turned to the first speaker, and fixed my eyes intently on him, as he seemed to be the most reasonable, or, rather, the least intoxicated, of the party. He seemed uneasy under my gaze; and I have often remarked, that a dishonest man invariably attempts to avoid a fixed look.

"You'll know me again when you see me next time," he said.

"I shall know both of you perfectly well," I answered.

The faces of the others were immediately turned from me.

"Now," I continued, "I only want to perform my duty, and that I will do; and I will not be interrupted in it." On saying this I stepped back to the window, and laying hold of the sash, "There was, when I came in, a policeman below, watching this house. If this room be not immediately cleared, I will call him. I have no objection to one of you staying, but I will have no more." I lifted the sash. Immediately all left the room, with the exception of the first speaker and one woman, who still kept her head averted.

"I suppose, Sir," said the man, "you have no objection to her stopping?"

"None whatever," I said.

"Then, Sir," said he, "you can see him, if you please; we don't intend you any harm, but we don't want to be interfered with ourselves." I walked to the side of the bed and drew back the tattered curtain. On the mattress was stretched the wretched remains of humanity. The eyes were still open, and the jaw had fallen, and the light struggling through the faded blue curtains at the foot of the bed increased its ghastly appearance. Nothing had been done for him since he expired, probably some hours before. With the exception of the scar of a wound long since healed on his throat, nothing beyond the usual marks of the disease appeared on the body. I was perfectly satisfied, and prepared to leave the room.

"Now, Sir," said the man, "I suppose you want your money; what is it?"

"I cannot tell till I see the books. I do not know how long Mr. Morton attended him before I came."

"Is it more than five pounds?" said he.

"It is less than that, but I do not know how much."

"Then," said he, "if you will go home and make out the account, before you are there ten minutes the money will be sent you."

He then, with some show of civility, preceded me down stairs with the candle, he opened the street door, and the moment I was on the pathway, it closed after me. The policeman was still on duty, but I thought I might be watched, so I took no notice of him. Presently I met another, and asked him if he knew a man of the name of Dawson residing in — Street? He did not know the name. I then reflected that I had no charge to give him, and I went on to Morton's. As soon as got there I asked for Mrs. Morton, and together we made out the account; it amounted to three pounds fifteen shillings. We had hardly completed it when the woman I had seen at Dawson's, wearing a deep veil, entered the surgery, saying she had come to pay Mr. Dawson's bill. I put it before

her, and she laid down the money on the counter without a remark. I receipted the bill and handed it to her, but she did not take it, as she did not want it. Before getting to the door, however, she changed her mind, and took it with her. The next morning I found some fragments of it in the road in an adjoining street.

I supped that evening with Morton and his wife. He was seated in an easy chair beside the fire in his bed-room. After supper, Mrs. Morton, seeing I was fatigued with the exertions of the day, insisted on my taking a chair opposite him, and also prescribed and prepared for me with her own hands a draught to be taken before leaving the house, composed of, in medical phraseology, refined sugar, warm water, and compound spirits of juniper. She then seated herself by the lamp at the table, and was soon occupied at the homely but necessary task of mending stockings. Morton commenced the conversation, by saying—

“So that poor fellow, Dawson, is gone at last.”

“Poor fellow!” I said, with something very like indignation in my tone and manner; “I cannot imagine how you can speak of such a wretch with one word of compassion. I do not think I ever met with a case less deserving commiseration. A ruffian, a receiver of stolen goods, a misleader of youth, and a drunkard. I should say it would be impossible to have found a more perfect specimen of the genuine London scoundrel.”

“To those qualifications,” said Morton, coolly, “you may add, forger and returned convict.”

“You know him, then,” I said, somewhat surprised.

“Yes,” said Morton, “I knew something of him in London, before he was transported, and I renewed the acquaintance at Sydney, when he was employed as a convict. I was called in for a very severe incision he had made in his throat, with a pocket knife, with a view to self-destruction. (Here naturally ensued the medical history of the case, which, although I, of course, highly commended the system he adopted, I will not



inflict on my readers.) "I should also mention," he continued, "that this was his second attempt at suicide. On the voyage out he attempted to drown himself, by leaping overboard, to escape being flogged."

"We are, then, to add determined suicidal monomania to his other qualifications."

"Certainly not; there was no more mania about him than about a man who would leap into a pond to avoid being gored by a bull; he simply chose what appeared to him the least of two evils. But I know his history well; and even now, with all his misdeeds before me, I cannot avoid saying, 'Poor fellow!'"

"Who was he?" I asked.

"If you are not in a hurry for half an hour, I will give you a sketch of his life. Dawson's father was a messenger in a public office, and my hero was his only child. He was a steady, persevering, honest, and religious man, and carefully educated his son in his own principles. While Dawson was very young his father got him a situation as an errand boy in a large wine and spirit merchant's establishment, and his conduct was in every respect irreproachable; working with great industry and regularity during the day, and sleeping at the house of his parents—who also kept a small shop—at night. When he was about twenty years of age his father died. Dawson appears to have entertained a great respect for the old man, and was much afflicted at his death. His mother continued the shop, and nothing could exceed Dawson's attention to his remaining parent. He kept the books of her little trade, made her purchases for her in the cheapest market, advised her in her little difficulties; and was, in fact, in every respect a most excellent and exemplary son. The next ten years passed over with little to notice. He possessed the perfect confidence of his employers, and gradually rose in grade till he was appointed foreman—a situation not only requiring an honest man to hold, but one of perfect sobriety as well.

His duties as a son were performed as unremittingly as ever. As years and infirmity crept upon his mother, and querulous old age developed itself, his attention and patience appeared to increase in proportion. As often as the idea of marrying occurred to him, the helpless situation of his mother as often presented an insuperable obstacle to carrying out his wish. The fear of his taking a wife was also continually before his mother ; and the latter years of her life were embittered by the idea that he would marry, and she might lose him—her increasing infirmities having made her selfish in the extreme. A circumstance occurred that made this idea still more terrible. Dawson was sincerely attached to a young woman, a servant in the house of his employer. One day he informed his mother that he should like to marry her, if they might live in the house with her, of course paying her for the rooms they occupied. He made this proposition with the idea of persuading his mother, who was getting exceedingly avaricious, to consent to the arrangement. But age had not only made the old woman jealous of her son's affection, but rendered her intensely selfish and suspicious into the bargain. She received the news of his intended marriage in great anger, hinted that it was a conspiracy to get at her money (it was known she had put by a little, but where or how much nobody knew) ; and the only quarrel that ever took place between them, certainly on Dawson's part, since the death of her husband, was upon this subject. As Dawson was obliged, by the tyranny of the old woman, to postpone the wedding, the affections of the damsel certainly chilled in proportion, perhaps not unnaturally angry at the preference given by Dawson to the wishes of his mother. Dawson was greatly annoyed at this, for he was really much attached to her ; but, with a certain amount of vanity, thought it was merely a temporary feeling of disappointment that occasioned it, and confidently expected the cloud would some day blow over. In

this he was sadly disappointed. One fine morning, when she took her holiday, she profited by the opportunity, and married a policeman, who had been endeavouring to make himself agreeable for some months past. Dawson, in whom vanity and affection were both strongly developed, was for some time much afflicted at the circumstance. The next year his mother died, leaving all she possessed to her son. Soon after the funeral, Dawson disposed of the shop, fixtures, and good-will; and added the proceeds to the ready money she had left, which, with the sum he had himself saved during the seventeen years he had been in his situation, made him, at thirty-two years of age, the master of more than six hundred pounds ready money.

“He now seriously determined on settling himself for life, and, with his accustomed caution, looked round him for a good and respectable young woman for his wife. Most unmarried men paint an ideal picture of the woman they would like to marry, though few ever meet with the original. Fortune, however, threw in Dawson’s way one formed exactly after his own model. She was about twenty-five years of age, tall, but exceedingly well made, with a quiet, almost lady-like appearance and manner, regular features, and pleasing expression of countenance. Her position, however, was not superior to his own; she, as well as her sister, were servants in the private house of a most respectable solicitor. He formed her acquaintance in the following manner:—

“Dawson was member of a mechanics’ institution, and this gentleman took—as well as in many other good and useful works—a great interest in its management and welfare. Dawson was elected on one of its committees, and, on making some arrangements connected with the society, he had occasion to call at the private house of the solicitor, and there, for the first time, saw his future wife, and, for the first time in his life, fell really desperately in love. He soon found he had occasion to

call frequently at her house, on affairs connected with the institution, and almost as frequently at an hour when the solicitor was from home. In due time he proposed to her, and was readily accepted. He opened to her his views, and certainly, for a couple in their position in life, they seemed to promise both success and happiness. Dawson proposed taking a public-house—an occupation for which he was eminently qualified. He was an excellent judge of the business, patient, good tempered, honest, and of extreme sobriety. He possessed as well a most frank, pleasing manner; but, at the same time, a frame so powerful, that few unruly or tipsy men could withstand, and a certain determination of character about his eye that it would have been dangerous to provoke. At last Dawson found a house to be disposed of that in every way but one was all that could be desired. His whole capital did not exceed six hundred pounds, and the lowest terms for which the lease could be purchased was one thousand. He knew perfectly well that nothing was easier than for him to obtain the excess from his brewers, but Dawson understood the business too well to put himself willingly in their power. A friend came forward to assist him where least he had expected to find one. His future wife advised him to consult her master professionally on the subject, and, on so doing, found, to his great satisfaction, that one of that gentleman's clients had five hundred pounds he wished to invest at five per cent. on good security. Dawson warmly expressed his gratitude, but the solicitor candidly informed him 'that he was benefited by the transaction himself, and, therefore, no thanks were due to him. Besides his bill of costs he had had the opportunity of making a new client, and of obtaining a secure investment for an old one.' The transfer of both house and license being effected, Dawson took possession of the premises, and found, to his great satisfaction, that not only had he not been deceived in the value

of the business, but there was every prospect of his making it a far more profitable investment than he had anticipated. The day was now fixed for the wedding. It was to come off without any unnecessary show ; the bride's sister was to be bridesmaid, and her master not only allowed them the use of the house for the day, but, with great kindness, insisted on providing the wedding breakfast. The public-house was left in charge of a friend in whom he had the fullest reliance, and Dawson started off on his week's wedding trip, the happiest of men.

"To the surprise of all, about three days after the wedding, a cab drove up to the door of the public-house, and Dawson and his wife entered. His friend welcomed him warmly, and congratulated them both on their marriage. Dawson received his advances somewhat coldly, but his temper was, perhaps, ruffled by an altercation he had had with the cab-driver. His cold, stern manner, however, did not wear off during the whole of the day. Never, perhaps, was a man so completely changed in so short a time. That good humour that forms so attractive a feature in the landlord had gone, and a cold, sullen, haughty look had usurped its place. His wife was also changed, but not so much as her husband ; still, there was none of that cheerful alacrity in her manner that sets so well on the young wife first entering on her household duties. She was cold to all ; and, had it not been for a certain appearance of dread, indifferent to her husband.

"The next morning Dawson's friend rendered an account of his stewardship. Things had gone on in a most satisfactory manner during his absence. Dawson thanked him warmly for the trouble he had taken, and his friend left in the course of the day. After he had gone, Dawson dressed himself carefully, and, after giving some instructions to the barman, left the house. His wife watched anxiously which road he took, then immediately dressed herself for walking, and, in passing

the bar, told the man she should return in about an hour, but not to say anything about it to her husband, if he came in in the meantime, unless he asked for her. Here was already an element of disorganisation in the house; she had made a confidant of her husband's servant, and the man, finding the house was divided against itself, soon turned the knowledge to his own advantage. The wife, after speaking to the barman, went to the door, opened it, then appeared to hesitate, and finally re-entered the house. She went into the small parlour behind the bar, and, seating herself on a chair, with her walking-dress still on, remained apparently deeply absorbed in thought. There she sat, without movement, and without taking the slightest notice of any one for nearly an hour. At last she heard her husband's voice outside the house. She immediately rose from her chair, rushed up stairs, and, in a few minutes, descended with her ordinary dress on, leaving no appearance of her previous intention of going out. The glance she gave her husband as he entered the bar was one of anxiety not unmingled with fear. From his countenance she could judge nothing. Though still intensely stern, not one look did he give towards her, nor did he let fall one word as to the individual he had visited, or the object of his visit.

"Another week passed and still no change in the behaviour of Dawson; he was, perhaps, somewhat more occupied with his business, but still it was not the attention that an intelligent man gives to an affair in which he has embarked all he possessed. One morning, while standing at the bar, the solicitor entered. Dawson received him respectfully, and took him into the little parlour, where they were occupied in earnest conversation for more than an hour. When he left, he shook hands with Dawson in a most friendly manner; and Dawson thanked him warmly for the trouble he had taken. Mrs. Dawson knew of the visit, but, being engaged in some domestic matters up stairs, she did

not disturb them. Shortly afterwards, another change came over Dawson's behaviour ; instead of the cold, stern manner which he had hitherto adopted, he put on a rollicking, jovial, boasting tone, especially in the afternoon ; indeed, for some time past he had hardly ever appeared in his business till the middle of the day. His customers were rapidly falling off. All that civil, good-humoured attention, that had pleased so much in the commencement had left him, and he daily became more idle and talkative, and was quarrelsome if any one disagreed with him in conversation. His better class of customers had left his house, and others of a very questionable character frequented it. He had established sweepstakes for the different races ; and the police informed him that it was supposed card-playing was frequently practised in his house, and warned him against its continuance. His behaviour to his wife was that of cold indifference. He seemed not to take the slightest interest in anything she did ; but one day, a circumstance occurred that showed there was still something rankling in his mind. One evening, in conversation with others in the bar parlour, she mentioned some casual remark her sister had made the day before. Dawson, who was apparently asleep in an arm-chair near the fire, started up like a madman, seized the poker, and, had it not been for the interference of those present, he might have finished his career with a sentence for murder or manslaughter. His astonished visitors attempted to pacify him, but their efforts were useless, for he continued a volley of abuse and threats against her of such a description, that at the urgent solicitations of his customers, she applied the next day for a summons against her husband, and refused to return to the house till it was heard. Dawson, when cool the next morning, began to regret what had occurred ; he went to the solicitor and gave him his version of the affair. He said his wife had insulted him, and that he, in a fit of passion, had threatened

her ; that he regretted what had taken place, and promised that, if she would return, a scene of this description should never occur again. The solicitor rated him soundly on his cruel behaviour to his wife, but kindly offered to attempt a reconciliation. He completely succeeded ; and the same evening his wife came home. Dawson took no notice of her, and things resumed the accustomed cold, unhappy manner they had worn before the quarrel. As his business fell off, Dawson's habits of intoxication increased in proportion. To drinking he added another vice : that of gambling. As his bets on horses were usually made when he was half drunk, there is no difficulty in imagining that he lost. The results were, that his brewer and distiller were unpaid, his barman became more dishonest, and the quality of his goods, from adulteration, worse. Things were rapidly approaching a climax. At last, a most disreputable case of card-sharping took place in his house ; and as the police attempted to arrest one of the accused parties, whom Dawson had concealed, and then denied that he was on the premises, a quarrel ensued, and the wretched man, more than half drunk, knocked down one of the policemen. He was taken to the station with great difficulty, brought before the magistrate the following day, and sentenced to two months' imprisonment for the assault.

"On leaving the prison Dawson walked slowly and sadly towards his home. A certain presentiment of misfortune hung over him.\* During his incarceration, he had not heard one word from his wife, and a vague doubt of her conduct during the time made him still more wretched. As he approached his home, his step was faster, and its rapidity increased the nearer he came to it. On arriving, he found the house closed, and apparently uninhabited. Thunderstruck at the sight he was for a moment at a loss what steps to take. At last, he determined on ascertaining if there were any one in the house. He knocked at the



door, and it was opened by the wife of a policeman. Dawson entered, and looked round him in amazement. The house was destitute of furniture, with the exception of the trade fixtures and a bed and a few chairs belonging to the policeman. He went into the cellars, and found all the remaining stock he possessed at the time of his imprisonment had been removed. Dawson, at first, was utterly bewildered, but, in a short time, his former energy returned, and he determined on tracing his property. The woman in possession could give him no information. 'A gentleman had called at the station, and wanted a policeman to take charge of an empty house, and her husband had accepted it.' Upon making inquiry in the neighbourhood, he found his stock had been sold under a bill of sale, and that his furniture had been removed to the house of his friend, the solicitor. Dawson immediately went to his office, fully aware of the kind intention that dictated the act ; but, to his intense astonishment, on arriving at the office, found himself received with the greatest surprise and indignation. He was treated as a worthless fellow, and informed that if he presumed to go near his wife, who had taken refuge in his, the solicitor's house, he would not only apply to a magistrate for protection, but also, acting on the judgment that had been entered upon his bond, have him arrested. All Dawson's former spirit had left him. Utterly miserable, he knew not what step to take. He wandered into the neighbourhood of his former employers, and got into conversation with some of his old acquaintances, among others the policeman who had married his first love. He showed Dawson much kind feeling, and took him to his home, and there the unhappy man learnt from his wife the full truth of what, in part, he had unfortunately been in possession of already.

"Dawson, on the day of his wedding, as I before said, left London the happiest of men ; in a few days

he returned one of the most wretched. In the interim he had discovered that before her marriage she had been the mother of an illegitimate child. When he arrived in London, he called on the solicitor, and in confidence told him all. He affected the greatest surprise ; said he had known both sisters for several years ; in fact, since their mother, an excellent, pious woman, died. He promised to make every inquiry on the subject, and, without the slightest concealment, let Dawson know the result. He called on him about a week afterwards, and 'was sorry to say it was too true. When very young, she had been deceived under a promise of marriage by a scoundrel, and had given birth to a child—that the father died shortly afterwards ; but that since that time her conduct had been in every respect irreproachable.' He now learnt that the solicitor himself was the father—that she had had another child by him ; and that there was too much reason to believe the other sister occupied a position in the establishment equally infamous.

"Dawson now fully perceived the miserable dupe he had been made. He rapidly determined on saving something, if possible, out of the wreck of his property, by selling the lease and good-will of his business. But how to pay off the present incumbrance ? He owed four hundred pounds, and even at its depreciated value he would obtain six for it, but his lease and papers were in the hands of the solicitor. In an evil moment, he forged the acceptance of his former employers to a bill of exchange, and obtained the money, intending, as he stated—and I fully believe it—to take it up before it was due. He applied to the solicitor for his deeds—that gentleman imagining there had been something wrong in the transaction, set himself to work to discover the truth, and in a very short time the forgery was discovered. Dawson was apprehended, tried, and finally sentenced to transportation. The rest is soon told : under the good advice of the gaol chaplain, and

assisted by the reminiscence of his former respectability, he determined, if possible, to commence life afresh, and at first behaved so well on the voyage out, as to get many little indulgences allowed him. His propensity to drink, however, was not yet extinct. He was detected in the act of secreting a bottle of spirits from the cabin of one of the officers, and was sentenced to be flogged for the offence. On being brought up for punishment, he made a leap overboard with the intention of committing suicide by way of escaping the degradation ; but he was saved with some difficulty, and the punishment inflicted. This was the key-stone of his infamy ; he immediately settled down into the hardened depraved convict. In Sydney, in consequence of some punishment he had received, and perhaps disgusted at his position, he attempted to cut his throat. I was sent for to attend him, and thus my acquaintance with him was renewed. About three months since I was called in to see a man suffering from erysipelas from a wound he had received in the head. This man was Dawson ; when he got better, I could easily perceive that he recognised me ; but I made no remark, nor he neither. From that time till the moment I was called in to attend him for his attack of delirium tremens, saw nothing of him whatever."

"But," I remarked, "whatever credit he may have acquired in the early part of his life appears to have been thoroughly cancelled by the latter."

"Granted ; but still I cannot help a feeling of pity for a man possessed of such good natural qualities."

"Whatever good qualities he may have possessed were certainly at last utterly extinguished."

"Not exactly ; and absurd as it may appear, I submit that his habit of drinking, and his attempts at suicide, are proofs to the contrary. The elements of good were never thoroughly dead within him, and it was the continual remembrance of his former respectability, contrasted with the utter hopelessness of re-

covering it, that required the constant application of the gin bottle to allay."

"Making good," I said, "the lines of Dante—

*"Nessun maggior dolore  
Che ricordarsi, del tempo felice  
Nella miseria."*

"Precisely," said Morton, "and you may now conclude the verse if you please,—

*'e cio sa, il tuo dottore.'*"

I laughed, as an all-approving guest should do at the bad jest of a courteous host.

"And what became of the solicitor?"

"He is still in practice, and much respected. His wealth has greatly increased. He enjoys the full confidence of a numerous body of clients, and is considered an ornament to the honourable profession of which he is a member."

## CHAPTER X.

THE PANTOMIMIST—HIS WIFE AND CHILD—THE LITTLE  
NURSE—CASE OF INFLAMMATION OF THE LUNGS—  
THE FAIRY—THE ROBBERY.

DURING my attendance on Morton's patients, I obtained a short insight into the domestic manners and life of a class to which I had hitherto been a total stranger—I mean the low pantomime performers of the minor theatres. The man in this case was not even in the higher walk of that humble profession, indeed, it had been said that he was once the jack-pudding of a booth attending fairs in the country; but this he proved so clearly not to have been the case, that it was little better than slander to repeat it. He, like all his fellows, had been, in his own opinion, the victim of intrigue on the part of his brother actors, and the statement alluded to was told me by himself, in a moment of confidence, to prove the fact, or I should not have quoted it. Another element that had acted against his rise in the profession was the usual gross want of discrimination on the part of managers to rising native, British talent. Although detesting imposition, and justly proud of his family name, Smith, that had given more men of talent to the country than any other in the English language, he once bent to the force of public opinion and accepted an engagement under a Polish name of great difficulty of pronunciation, that had been invented for him by that hard-working member of a transpontine dramatic company—the big drum in the orchestra. The attempt to impose on the public was a failure. He had a few words in English to say, and few as they were he made such ingenious applications of the letter H that no

foreigner could attempt to imitate. His appearance was a failure, and he deserved it, in fact, he acknowledged it himself, although he considered the reason the local paper did not mention him arose solely from the difficult orthography of the name he had assumed. That he was a man of ability was clearly proved by the fact that, on more than one occasion, he had taken the part of clown at the Theatre Royal, Deptford, at a few hours' notice, when his respected superior was too drunk to appear, and performed it in such a manner as to render utterly unnecessary the previous apology and explanation of the manager, stating either that severe indisposition or family misfortune "would cause the absence of Mr. E. in that evening's performance. Mr. Smith had, however, kindly consented to take the part. He trusted the known sympathy that a British public invariably showed to every dispensation of Providence would induce them to pardon any little irregularity or imperfection that might appear in the course of the evening."

His wife was a figurante at the same theatre; in appearance she had little to boast of, but seemed mild, amiable, and of excessive simplicity. She appeared as helpless a woman in the ordinary duties of life as could well be imagined, and was fitly matched to a husband as thoughtless and improvident. It would appear, at first sight, that such a marriage would have been a most unhappy one, but the opinion would have been most erroneous. They were perfectly happy and contented. They were provided, to use their own phraseology, against a rainy day; consequently they had no occasion for any anxiety about the future. They not only held, with an indisputable title, the several articles of furniture in their room, but he moreover possessed a watch that represented at any time at least a week's board and lodging; moreover, a frock coat, besides the one he ordinarily wore, that would raise at least twelve shillings at a few minutes' notice.

I do not think their available assets exceeded the items I have enumerated. Another method of obtaining money practised by couples similarly situated was wanting in their case, that of mortgaging certain portions of female apparel superfluous as regards the eye of the superficial observer, and less missed by the wearers themselves in summer than in winter. To these it is not necessary further to allude. I recommend any person curious on the subject to cast his eye down the catalogue of a pawnbroker's sale, and he will obtain all the information he requires.

That the last-mentioned articles of dress were originally possessed by the wife I am certain, from the fact that a child about two years of age, my patient, was sufficiently warmly clad, although its clothing was evidently that of an adult cut down, and that done in so unseamstress-like a manner, as to leave their original application perfectly clear to the quick eye of the medical man.

It appeared, by some fatality, that while the parents were at rehearsal a few days before I saw the child, a little girl of some seven or eight years of age, residing in the house, took their baby out for a walk. In a short time the attention of the little nurse was attracted by some tumblers passing, who had been exhibiting their feats in the neighbourhood, and who were now seeking some other locality where they could perform with advantage. They were dressed "en bourgeois," that is to say, that over their ocher-coloured arms and torsos they wore the singular frock-coats peculiar to their profession. They were in cut very like those worn by the population generally, and were not only of a colour that had defied dirt, and perished in the struggle, but had that appearance impossible to describe, which indicates the street equilibriust, "in repose," as certainly as the uniform jacket of the soldier, when off duty, is a sign of his profession. The wind blowing rather freshly, blew their loose garments about in such

a manner as to expose the sky blue spangled short trousers, as well as the theatrical pantaloons, terminated by those ankle-jacks, that not only go far to destroy the illusion, but show that even in their most sublime efforts they are still only ordinary mortals. The temptation was too much for the child, and she followed the brothers for some distance, till they found a favourable spot for their performances. It was in a locality surrounded by respectable houses, with little to fear from disturbance either from carriages or the police, and the mud was soft without being sloppy. Completely bewildered by the concluding feat of one brother on the top of a high pole balanced on the pit of another brother's stomach, she took the wrong turning as she left, and instead of proceeding home, took a totally different direction. After walking some distance, she discovered her mistake ; but at that moment the weather changed, and the rain began to pour down in torrents, which continued the whole day. It was nearly two hours after she had left the house before she returned to it. They were both, of course, thoroughly wet through. Fortunately for the little nurse, but most unfortunately for the baby, the parents were from home when she arrived. She therefore took the opportunity of concealing, as much as possible, her fault, by drying the child in bulk before the fire, occasionally turning it round, that all sides might get the benefit of the warmth. By the time the parents arrived from the theatre, not only were the outer clothes dried, but she had also contrived to get the child to sleep with the wet under-clothing still upon it. As frequently happens, the rehearsal had lasted to so late an hour that the parents had only time to take a little refreshment before they were again obliged to leave for the theatre. They, therefore, did not wake the baby, but told the little girl to give it its food when it awoke. Before they returned from the performance, the child



had been undressed and was asleep for the night. The under-clothing was then dried, and nothing, for the moment, was known of the matter. The next day the child appeared in such a feverish condition that the parents began to be alarmed. The day after, it was worse; and in the evening the malady had increased to such a height that the mother was obliged to be absent from the performance, and my services were required. I found the child suffering from a very severe attack of inflammation of the lungs; and, indeed, so serious were the symptoms that at first sight I thought it would have been impossible to have saved it. The poor mother evidently felt that the case was desperate, and it was painful to watch the intense affection, combined with utter helplessness, she exhibited. Weeping bitterly, yet wishing to save her child, she had done everything the gossips in the house advised; and, as each had evidently taken a different view of the case, and as all were in favour of prompt measures, it may easily be imagined that the infant had not benefited by their prescriptions. The last opinion that had been given was, that it was a severe attack of wind, as might easily be seen by its difficulty of breathing; and a quantity of gin was immediately procured, and with great, and even stern determination, poured down the infant's throat. I immediately ordered a warm bath. At first sight, it appeared that I might as easily have ordered a sea-bath, as there was not a utensil in the room, or in those of the other lodgers, sufficiently large to hold the child. Suggestions for a compromise were made by three or four females present; but I considered it necessary, and would take no alternative. While we were speaking, a rapid step was heard upon the stairs, and a slim young man of middle height, dressed in a loose overcoat, which had blown open, discovering a sort of shirt of mail and a tunic studded with brass knobs. His face was thickly plastered with paint, his eyebrows blackened with cork,

and a pair of curled mustachios of the same, greased well in upon his upper lip. He entered, or rather rushed, into the room, exclaiming—

"I can't stop a moment!—how's the child?" Perceiving me, he continued, "I hope there's no danger, Sir."

"I hope not," I said, "but the child is very ill."

"What had better be done, Sir?" said he.

"I have ordered a warm bath, but there appears to be some difficulty in getting a tub."

"My dear," said his wife, "we have none large enough."

"Ask the Fairy," said he.

"Oh! pray go, somebody," said the wife; "I shall be so much obliged."

"The stage-manager has let me off for the after-piece. As soon as the next act is over, I will come back; but go for the Fairy at once."

On saying this, he rushed down the stairs as rapidly as he had mounted them, and left the house.

I had, of course, heard of several kinds of fairies, but the fairy of the tub was entirely new to me, and I waited with some impatience for her appearance.

At last I heard a foot upon the stairs; but it was as utterly unlike all preconceived notions of a fairy-like step as could well be imagined. It ascended with remarkable deliberation, accompanied with a wheezing sound. Immediately it arrived at the top of the stairs, a tub first entered the room about eighteen inches above the floor, and a very diminutive, but enormously fat, woman followed it. This was the Fairy. Her autobiography was as short as her person. Like other fairies nobody knew where she came from. Her first appearance in history was as a fairy in a pantomime. She performed the part for several years; and, as she was remarkably short of her age, she continued waving the Dutch metal wand much longer than is usual on

the stage. After that, for a short time, she performed the lost young gentleman in genteel Victoria comedy ; but increasing both in fat and years, she was obliged to leave the profession. From her frequent performance of the character, she had acquired the name of the Fairy—what her real name might have been nobody seemed to know. Retired into private life, she continued to perform the character to her theatrical friends. When any one wanted assistance, the Fairy was first thought of ; whenever a stage princess was born, she attended as the fairy, and not only promised the infant innumerable blessings, but was of the greatest use to the mother. At the few marriages that took place she was present, and again not only blessed the young couple, but made herself useful at the dinner by washing the plates for the second course in a corner of the room. In cases of sickness, no fairy ever equalled her ; and, at the death-bed, if she quitted the character of fairy, it was to appear in another still more beautiful. How she lived no one knew. She was never paid by any one, and the crumbs that fell from the poor players' tables were not such as to account for her accumulated fat.

The tub was now before us, but another difficulty arose. The warm water was wanted. This, however, was of secondary importance ; all her fellow-lodgers immediately filled their kettles, and put them on their own fires. The mother, in the mean time, held the child on her lap. The Fairy would willingly have done it, but it was as impossible for her to have held it on her knees as for a cherub to sit down. At last the mother got anxious at John's not coming home, "The piece was over before this," she said, "and she could not imagine what had detained him." The Fairy suggested that it was an encore.

The kettles were accumulating, and the bath was no longer a matter of doubt. All was now in readiness, and the Fairy was assisting the mother to undress the infant, when the street-door opened, and two persons

were heard ascending the stairs. There appeared considerable difficulty in accomplishing it by one of the party. A strange voice was heard to say, "Now, wait a minute—there now, try another—let me help you.—Come, there are only two more." All in the room looked at each other with astonishment. Immediately afterwards Smith entered the room, assisted by a strange young man. He was evidently in great pain, as could be seen plainly through the paint still on his face, although he was now in his private clothes. It appeared that as soon as the act was over, he rapidly changed his dress, and immediately left the theatre as quickly as possible ; while running at the top of his speed, he stepped upon a piece of ice, slipped, and fell violently on the ground. He attempted to rise, but the pain was so great that he was obliged to relinquish the attempt. A young man coming by, helped him in the kindest manner ; and putting his arm round his waist, assisted him home. I examined the leg, and found nothing broken or dislocated, but he had sustained a most violent sprain.

The bath was at last ready, and the child was placed in it ; it was frightened, and cried violently. The mother tried to console it, but failed ; even the Fairy was unsuccessful. The father managed to creep by himself to the circle round the tub, the young man having left. He called to the child. The crying ceased. He went down on his knees at the foot of the tub, so as to face it. He then tried to amuse it by making some of his pantomime faces, though his heart was evidently overflowing with sorrow at the danger of his child. He called to it again, and attempted to make a still more ludicrous grimace ; the child was silent, and looked at him with a serious and inquiring face. There was cause for the expression of its countenance ; while the father was distorting his face with the clown's broad grin, the big tears were chasing each other down his cheeks.

The bath was over. The Fairy got some medicine from my prescription from the nearest druggist, and I left them for the night.

I called the next morning and found the child much better, but the parents were in the greatest distress; not only would his sprain confine him to the house for, perhaps, some weeks, but beyond this, there was a striking proof of the instability of human affairs. Those valuables, in whose possession he had set the decrees of fate at naught, and, like Ajax, defied the lightning—his watch and his best frock-coat—had both vanished. There was no doubt of the fact. The young man who had so kindly assisted him home was a pickpocket, and had taken them both.

This occurred on the Friday night; on the Saturday I left them in the greatest distress; on the Monday I found them in the highest spirits. At the theatrical treasury every supernumerary, pantomimist, wardroom-woman, and all the numerous hangers-on at a theatre, subscribed half a day's pay to assist them; and even the Fairy, whose previous Sabbath, I am sorry to say, was spent in scrubbing out the boxes, gave her ninepence.

The child recovered:

## CHAPTER XI.

## A MATERNITY CASE—HISTORY OF AN UNFORTUNATE FAMILY.

ALTHOUGH Morton's health was sufficiently re-established to allow him to leave the house, it was hardly strong enough to enable him to attend to his profession. It was, therefore, agreed between us that he should take a short journey into the country, and pass a few days with his wife's family, before resuming his usual avocations, and that I should attend to his practice till his return. Among other appointments held by him was that of branch accoucheur to a maternity charity, and from which he received the sum of ten shillings and sixpence for every case he attended. Notice having been sent him that a patient was in his immediate neighbourhood, and that his assistance might be in hourly requisition, I was of course frequently obliged to return to the house during the day, that I might be on the spot if wanted. It unfortunately occurred for me on the last night of my sojourn at the surgery. The night-bell was rung, and on opening the window, I perceived a very little girl standing at the door. She told me I was wanted immediately at Mrs. C.'s, in ——— Street; as I did not know the locality I told her to wait and I would go with her. I glanced at the weather; it was cold, with a drizzling rain. I dressed myself accordingly. When I got into the street not a soul was to be seen but my little guide and the solitary policeman, standing as usual under the gas-lamp, watching the street door. Every street we passed through was equally silent and deserted; the quiet was so intense that the shivering and hard breathing of the

little girl with me appeared singularly distressing. Stimulated, perhaps, by the intense cold she conducted me rapidly through the streets, and at last stopped at a house of somewhat more respectable appearance than the generality in the neighbourhood. The door was opened by a kind-looking, middle-aged woman, whose garments had evidently been thrown on in great haste. She conducted me to the foot of the stairs, while she raised her flickering candle above her head to throw the light as far up as possible, telling me the room was on the two-pair back. My little guide, who was, it appears, the daughter of the woman of the house, remained below with her mother, and I ascended the staircase as quickly and noiselessly as possible. When I arrived at the second floor landing, the door of the room opened, and a tall, thin, gaunt-looking man, apparently lately recovered from fever, holding a sickly, emaciated child in his arms, opened the door. As he left the room he placed the candlestick he carried in my hand, and, without saying a word, descended the staircase. I offered to light him down, but he civilly declined it, and I entered the room of my patient. I had been lately used to scenes of squalid poverty, but I had never seen anything that surpassed the scene that presented itself to my view. An old chair, a wash-hand basin and jug in a corner of the room, a rickety table, with two cups and a saucer on it, and a scanty curtain to the window, constituted nearly the whole of the furniture. There was no bedstead in the room, but a bed was made upon the floor, between the door and the window, and facing the grate, that was destitute of a fire. On this bed lay my patient. Another, but much smaller bed, was placed beside it, but nearer the window, close to the external wall. I placed the rushlight on the chimney-piece, and having speedily completed my arrangements, I sat down on the chair beside the bed, the poor woman's back being towards me, as she lay with her face to the window. Fatigued by a hard day's work, I

sat with my elbow on the back of the chair, and leaning my head upon my hand, waited till my services should be required. The silence was only broken by the moans of the poor woman, and my common-place expressions of sympathy and exhortations to courage and patience. Heavy drowsiness came over me, and somewhat dulled the impression the situation would otherwise have made on me. Suddenly it occurred to me that the poor creature was sobbing violently, and that her exclamations were those rather of sorrow than of pain. Thoroughly awakened by the idea, I listened attentively, and found I was not mistaken. I arose from my chair, and taking the light from the chimney-piece, went to the other side of the bed, and stooping down, brought it to a level with the poor creature's face. It would be impossible to convey an idea of the intense grief and misery her countenance exhibited. No painting from the brush of the most talented artist could approach it. Such utter sorrow and desolation I never witnessed in my life. The tears were streaming from her eyes, but still so fixed was their gaze on the other bed that the retina was apparently insensible to the proximity of the candle. I looked towards the other bed. There appeared nothing on it but the scanty sheet and coverlid. An indefinite sensation came over me. I arose, and approaching it raised up the quilt, and saw stretched beneath it the pale wasted corpse of a girl of perhaps fifteen years of age, evidently the poor woman's daughter.

Silently and sadly I replaced the quilt, and putting the light on the chimney-piece, resumed my seat on the chair; but all drowsiness was gone. I spoke not; all attempt at conversation would have been useless, if not impertinent. I doubt even if my words would have been heard; certainly they would not have been heeded. Hour after hour passed, and the same silence continued, broken only by the uncontrollable bursts of sorrow of the poor woman, the suffering of the mind completely absorbing that of the body. Motionless as a statue,



and almost as breathless, I sat by her side. The grey winter's dawn became apparent through the ragged curtain, dimming the light on the chimney-piece, that already burnt almost to its socket ; still not a word was spoken. Stronger the light became, and as the day advanced, the wretched furniture of the room, the two beds in close proximity, each with its own sad occupant, were no longer the fearful vision of the night, but a stern reality. The recent dead—the yet unborn—were close together, crushing the poor mother both in mind and body. The sun had risen before my duties were over, and I left my patient to the charge of a poor woman from a neighbouring house, who, I believe solely from charity, though, God help her, from her appearance, she was better qualified to receive than to give gratuitous assistance, had come in to help the poor mother after her own husband had gone to his work. On leaving the house I met the mistress, who was in readiness to open the door. She inquired with so much sympathy after the welfare of my poor patient that I was induced to ask of her the history of the case.

It appeared that the husband was the son of a country gentleman, who, when he died, left several children and very little property. Of course the largest proportion went to the eldest son, the remainder, after an annuity had been purchased for the widow, was divided among the younger, of whom this poor man was one. His father had endeavoured to compensate for the smallness of his portion by giving him the ideas and education of a gentleman of the day, and thus succeeded in making him as unfit to struggle through life as it was possible for ingenuity to invent. The education he had received was of the most superficial and useless description. The moral he had drawn from it was, that all labour was derogatory, and the greater the amount of industry a man possessed the lower he sank in social position. When about seven-

teen years of age his mother died, and he found himself under the guardianship of a gentleman who did his duty conscientiously, but not wisely. With but small funds at his disposal, he put him to a public school, where his preconceived notions of gentlemanly bearing were confirmed. On attaining his majority he found himself without a profession, but with about three thousand pounds in cash. Friends he had none, and but few acquaintances. He was not naturally extravagant, and, to do him justice, possessed innately the strongest principles of integrity. By way of improving his condition he married a girl without a shilling, and considerably beneath him in position. Her station was that of half niece-half housemaid to the mistress of the boarding-house where he resided. One qualification she possessed that was wanting in her husband: she did not fear labour, and had been used to it. A family came on, and as it increased his funds diminished. The poor woman frequently urged on him the necessity of seeking some employment, he angrily retorted by taunting her with the vulgarity of her ideas. At last, after fifteen years of matrimony, he found that a few hundred pounds was all that remained to him of his portion, and he decided on taking a business. In this transaction he was, of course, cheated as to its value, and being utterly ignorant of its management, it soon went to ruin. His manners were not adapted to please customers, and, from some absurd remains of pride still in him, the poor less than all others. His wife perceiving his fault volunteered to serve in the shop; this, however, was an indignity too great for him to entertain, so she occupied herself in teaching her daughter to become, what she was herself, an expert needlewoman. In the meantime the business had been rapidly falling off, rent and taxes were both unpaid, and when the broker was put in possession the whole of his goods were insufficient to meet the demand. During the time they had carried on the business two of their children had

died. With little more than some bedding they engaged a room in one of the back streets for themselves and their children, the girl, about fourteen, and an infant, about one year old. Poverty in its direst form stared them in the face. The wife and eldest girl worked hard with the needle, but all they could earn hardly covered the rent of their room. At last the father obtained the appointment of commission traveller for some small wholesale house in the tobacco line, but his manners being against him, his emoluments were of the scantiest description ; his clothes, moreover, were getting very shabby, and his appearance gained him but little favour. His daughter, however, assisted them a little by working at a cheap milliner's in the neighbourhood of the Strand. Unfortunately, the poor girl was badly clothed and badly nourished, and the appetite at fifteen is seldom quiescent long together. Still more unfortunately, her appearance was most attractive ; and, in one of her daily journeys to her work, she made the acquaintance of an infamous woman that ended in her ruin. .

The behaviour of the father giving great dissatisfaction to his employers, he was dismissed from his engagement, and obliged to seek for some other occupation. One day on returning to his home after an unsuccessful day's inquiry, he was much surprised at the expression of fear and anxiety on his wife's countenance. It appeared that the girl had not returned from the house she worked at. The father, who, with all his faults, had an intense affection for his child, immediately went to the dressmaker's, and was told that his daughter had not been there that day. Overwhelmed with grief, he went to every police-station he could think of, and inquired of every policeman he met—still no clue, no tidings of the unfortunate girl. About midnight he arrived at his own home, his eyes swollen with weeping, his cheeks pale, and his clothes drenched with the rain. There was no sleep in that room

the whole night. Every probability but the right one was brought forward. Their child was the same infant to them that she was fifteen years since. Twenty different schemes were proposed, all equally impracticable, for the next morning's search, and the sun rose on them still undetermined where to begin. The cry of the infant reminded them of their breakfast, and the day's miseries commenced with the fact that neither of them possessed a penny. But humanity and kindness appear inexhaustible among the poor; and another lodger, scarcely richer than themselves, lent them the money to purchase a small loaf of bread, and, with that, moistened with water and tears, were the vital energies for the long day's search renewed. His wife attempted to smooth his hat, ruffled by the last night's rain, and, with his clothes only half-dried upon him, he started on his mission. He had barely arrived at the corner of the street when all plan of action escaped him; he stood irresolute for some time, and at last determined on going to the City Police-office, and asking their advice. He was listened to with great sympathy, and every assistance readily promised him. One constable suggested that it would be advisable to have some bills printed describing her person, and offering some small reward. "These," he said, "should be left at the different stations, and in the shop-windows in the neighbourhood." This, in his circumstances, was impossible, and he then started westward with the intention of informing the police in Scotland-yard of his trouble, and imploring their advice and assistance. On his road thither the advice of the constable still haunted him; and as ill-fortune would have it, he passed the house of one of his late employer's customers, while thinking in what way the suggestion might be carried out. The shopkeeper owed nearly four pounds to the tobacconist, and the poor man determined, if possible, to possess himself of the amount. Assuming his business face, and putting on an off-hand careless

manner, he entered the shop, and told the owner he had called for his little account, and inquired whether he would not favour him with another order. The shopkeeper, who had been greatly discontented with his last purchase, declined giving another order, but said he was ready to pay the account, and asked for a receipt. Ill-fortune still followed him ; though without a penny in his pocket, in his rusty pocket-book was a receipt stamp. The money was paid and the receipt given, and soon afterwards a portion of it was spent on a handbill, offering a sovereign reward for his child, information to be given at the ——— police-office.

During the whole of the day the poor mother continued in a state of the most heart-rending anxiety. Continually was she opening the window to watch for her husband's return, but all in vain. Evening came, eight, nine, ten o'clock had struck, but still he did not arrive. At midnight the two knocks were heard at the door. She rushed down stairs to receive him. Could she be mistaken? No, it was he, but in a state of complete intoxication. What the poor creature's feelings were, when helping her drunken husband up the stairs, it would be difficult to imagine, more so to describe. Faint from hunger, fatigued from long watching, sick from over-anxiety, all this combined rendered her task the more difficult. Arrived in their room, his incoherent answers to her questions on the success of his search nearly drove her beside herself. One moment she was led to hope her child's recovery was certain, the next it was crushed by a remark to the contrary. "He had taken steps," he said, "that would set all right." "He was not a man to be beaten when he set about a thing—that was enough for her. What was she crying about? Was that the manner she ought to receive him with after he had acted with the energy and success he had?"

"Have you then, dear, succeeded?"

"Well, if he had not succeeded it was nearly the

same thing. She need not annoy herself about it. The police were to a man his friends. They would stand by him, he was sure of that, and he would always back them if they wanted assistance. There, she had better go to sleep at once, she was all right."

The poor woman was obliged to content herself for the present with this scanty information, and wait till the termination of another sleepless night for more complete details. Ah! how long and weary did the hours seem from daybreak till he awoke. At last her anxiety promised to terminate; he addressed her kindly, but it was solely to ask for some water to drink, his mouth was so parched. Having received it, he again fell asleep, and it was nearly eleven o'clock before he arose to the labours of the day. He now explained, with tolerable consistency and truth, the adventures of the previous day, omitting all mention of obtaining the money. To her questions as to the manner he had obtained sufficient to pay for the printing, as well as the reward the handbill offered, he answered snappishly that they had given him credit for the former, and he had no doubt he should be able to borrow the other from some friend. The poor woman sighed, but said nothing. He then asked if she had had her breakfast, a question that the poor creature's pale face and sunken eye, as well as the cries of the child, might have answered.

"No; she had nothing to get it with, and she did not like to ask Mrs. C. again."

"Oh," said he, "I called at the house yesterday for the five shillings they owed me, and I got it; there is half-a-crown, pay her the money she lent us, and get something to eat."

This was speedily done, and breakfast was over, but still he made no attempt to leave the house.

"Did he intend to make any inquiries to-day," she asked.

“No ; he had a headache ; he should be sure to hear if anything was heard of her.”

Every knock that came to the door seemed to startle him, and he insisted on her looking out of the window to see who it was. This she naturally attributed to his anxiety to receive the information he expected of his daughter's recovery. Had it occurred on the previous day she would have judged rightly ; but little did she imagine that another far different thought at present occupied his mind. He had committed his first act of dishonesty, and the probable result terrified him even into comparative apathy for the fate of his darling girl. He remained at home the whole of the day, and at night he left it to make, as he said, some inquiries at the police-station as to the result of the day's search. He returned again, but nearly as late as the previous night ; certainly not intoxicated, but he had evidently been drinking. To her inquiries he merely answered that they, the police, had received no information. Another sleepless night was in store for the poor woman, dreading lest the loss of their daughter might add habitual intoxication on the part of her husband to their other miseries. Ten o'clock the next morning found him still in bed ; his wife now, almost from habit, had opened the window and was looking out, when she saw a policeman gazing steadfastly at their window. “Is your husband at home ?” he called out. “Yes.” “I want him ; be quick.” The last observation was needless. In a moment the window was closed, and she rushed down stairs to open the door, regardless of the anxious questions of her now awakened husband as to who it was that wanted him. The door opened, and the policeman entered ; she rushed rapidly up the stairs, the policeman closely following. She entered the room, breathless from exertion and anxiety, and stood beside her husband, who was now sitting up in bed with terror stamped on his countenance.

"Simpson," said he, "I'm sorry to say you're wanted."

"Good God! what has happened?" said the wife, whose thoughts were naturally fixed on her daughter.

"Charge of obtaining money under false pretences; be quick."

The poor woman sunk on a chair, with a look less of horror than stupefaction.

"Come," said the policeman to her kindly, "don't be cast down; many a man I've seen that has got out of a worse affair than this. It will all come right at last, I've no doubt."

The scene at the station-house was very short.

"What is this?" said the inspector.

"Charge of obtaining money under false pretences, Sir; apprehended on a magistrate's warrant."

"Search him," said the inspector.

"One pound in gold, seven shillings in silver, and threepence-halfpenny in copper," said the policeman, after completing the search.

"Cannot I send the money to my wife?" asked the prisoner anxiously.

"Don't think there's much chance of it in this case," said the inspector; "but you can ask the magistrate—anything else on him, policeman?"

"Only a handbill, offering a sovereign reward for a young woman who had left her home, Sir."

The prisoner's eyes filled with tears, but he bit his lips and kept them back.

"Anything else?"

"Nothing, Sir."

"Lock him up."

The Jew tobacconist knew no mercy, it was a duty he owed to society, he said, to prosecute such a rascal, and he was determined to go through with it. Besides, without expressing it to the magistrate, his feelings had been hurt. "The wife had called on him and begged his forgiveness, on account of her helpless child and the



affliction they were in. Well! he always liked to be kind to people, so he told her if she would pay the money, and ten pounds law expenses he had incurred (how they had amounted to that sum it would be impossible to say), he would not appear against him. After calling on him several times, and interrupting him when he was engaged, she offered him thirty-seven shillings down (from whom she obtained it God only knows: those who subscribed it may God remember), and her furniture as security for the remainder. Well! he sent down a man to look at it who knew well what it was worth, and he wouldn't give a pound for the lot."

The father received only three months' imprisonment, it being his first offence. He might have put in the episode of his daughter as a plea "*ad misericordiam*," but some remains of the gentleman, added to the respect due from a father to his daughter, withheld him. At the expiration of the sentence his wife received him as if he had merely been absent on an ordinary day's employment; not a word was said of his punishment or release. This was to him a great relief. Happy as he was to leave the prison; he dreaded the moment he should meet her eye. To be humiliated in the eyes of the being he had always looked upon with a certain amount of condescension and protection, although at the same time he was most sincerely attached to her, would have been a cruel termination to his incarceration. She, however, with an exquisite delicacy, that only the fondest attachment could have elicited, let not a look or word fall which could have led him to imagine that she was even acquainted with the circumstance. Some alteration had taken place in his home. His wife had moved from a front to a back bed-room, and he found his scanty furniture still scantier than when he left; in other respects there was little difference. The child was both paler and thinner, but the mother attributed it solely to delicacy of con-

stitution, when continual privation would better have described the cause.

He had now to begin the world again ; but where could he commence ? His only crime had deprived him of his only reference. He could not dig ; to beg he was ashamed. The scanty earnings of his wife, even with the parish loaf and shilling a week, were not sufficient to support life and pay the rent of their room, humble as it was. He determined to apply in his distress to that refuge to all men out of employ—the London Docks. He arrived there at least an hour before they commenced work, hoping that, being one of the first, his chance of obtaining employment would be the greater. Early as he was he found many there before him, although not in such numbers as to deprive him of hope. When the labourers were admitted what was his disappointment to find that many of those that came the last were taken on, while he and others who had been among the first were rejected. Disconsolately he left the place with his silent brethren in misfortune. He wandered about the neighbourhood of the Thames Street wharves, in the hope of finding some employment, when he saw a gentleman carrying a heavy carpet-bag. He immediately volunteered his services, and they were accepted. He carried it for some distance till they found a cab, and received twopence for his trouble. When he arrived at home in the evening, this was the amount produced from his day's employment.

The next day he was again at the docks, and with the same unfortunate result ; another and another day passed, but with no better fortune. At last he addressed the person charged with choosing the labourers, saying that he hoped some day he would give him a turn. "He had been there," he said, "for many days, without being so fortunate as to obtain one day's work."

"But," said the man, "I cannot take you on ; you don't belong to the parish, do you ?"

"No, I do not," he replied ; "should I be certain of work if I did ?"

"I don't say that," was the answer ; "but parishioners have always the preference. The Dock Company pays enormous sums in poor-rates, and those likely to increase that rate are chosen the first."

"But still it is a hard case for those who, like myself, come from a distance."

"Where do you live, then ?"

"On the other side of the water."

"Well," said the official, "if it is any satisfaction for you to know it, there are others far worse off than you are. I frequently have men, in hard winter weather, from Putney, Hammersmith, and Fulham. It's bad enough for them to walk here, and, after a hard day's work, to walk back again in the evening ; but to go back penniless after losing their time, must beat a poor fellow out and out."

"You cannot give me a turn, then ?" inquired Simpson.

"Well, come to-morrow, and I'll see what I can do ; but remember that men here don't sleep over their work, or if they do so once they never try it again."

The next morning he was at his post, and performed his full amount of labour. His dinner consisted of a piece of bread and some water, but he had the satisfaction of bringing his wage home with him in the evening. Never was money more necessary or welcome. The advanced state of pregnancy of his wife was diminishing the amount of his earnings, and his rent was getting into arrears. For several days his labour continued, and at last he proposed taking something more for his meals than the scanty nutrition he had lately been accustomed to. Before he put this resolve into execution, he one morning felt an unaccountable feeling of languor come over him when at his work. The next day it continued, accompanied with pain in his limbs. He still, however, exerted himself to the utmost. The

third day, however, terminated his labours at the docks. Sick, faint, and cold, he was obliged to leave work in the middle of the day, and return home. Once in bed, his illness increased, and an order was obtained from the relieving officer for the attendance of the parochial surgeon. This gentleman received from the parish authorities an allowance of a few pence for each case, finding his own medicines, and as this illness was one of fever, requiring two visits a day, and most expensive medicines for its proper treatment—it may be imagined that the professional attendance the poor man received was not adequate to the necessities of the case. The first visit was paid by the surgeon himself, and once in every three days afterwards his assistant—a young man walking the Borough hospitals as a first-year's student—took charge of him. The keeper of a respectable chandler's shop would not have left its management to as small an amount of professional experience as this young gentleman possessed, but as it was fully equal to the average that poor-law economy required for the treatment of the poor, the patient had no right to complain. His case was, however, of so serious a description, that the surgeon positively applied to the union for some wine and medicinal comforts. A small amount was certainly sent; but, as the surgeon received an intimation that the parish was very poor, and that the rates were already very heavy, and necessarily the strictest economy must be practised, the application was not repeated.

Thanks to a good constitution, a little skill and admirable nursing from his excellent wife, he got through the disease, and had just entered that sublimest state of human misery, the pauper convalescence, when one evening a low tap was heard at their room-door, and a gentlemanly-looking young man—one of the parish curates—entered. With great kindness and sympathy he informed them that he had heard news of their lost child, and hoped they would again receive

her. He believed her to be truly penitent, but that repentance was not the only plea to their forgiveness, she was also exceedingly ill. Indeed, he was afraid, from what the hospital physician stated, her lungs were seriously affected.

The only ray of joy that had entered their dwelling for months past was now before them. The mother almost incapable of exertion from her position; the father just risen from a bed of fever, and with abject poverty their lot, they received the news of the return of the diseased, consumptive prostitute to their home as a blessing, that God in His mercy had sent them, as a consolation for the misery they had endured. The poor child's career had indeed been short, but it had passed through many of the commonest phases of the life. Wealth was soon satiated. She then passed from one infamous house to another worse, occasionally varied by a drunkard's bed at the police-station. Sickness and sorrow both fell on her. Gin in both cases was her remedy, and her god. A few months had seen many changes in her—from the innocent child into the profligate woman; from the profligate woman into the hospital patient; from the hospital patient to the sorrowing and repentant sinner.

The poor girl arrived home the next day in company with the curate. In appearance she was miserably altered; and wore both on face and person the marks of rapid consumption. Her parents received her with the greatest affection; and during her short illness attended her with the utmost kindness. Their lot was considerably ameliorated for the moment by the attention of the curate, not only as regarded spiritual consolation, but in the many little necessities he was able to procure them from the charitable; among others, the ticket from the maternity society, that was the means of introducing me to their acquaintance. I should state that the poor girl expired the day before I was called in.

I have, I am afraid, dwelt too long on this melan-

choly case, but it is impressed strongly on my memory, by being the first that I had seen of those so common in the metropolis, and so admirably described by Dr. Letheby—"Where life and death go hand in hand; where the woman in labour, the new-born child, the patient stricken down by fever, and the corpse waiting for interment, have no separation from each other, or the rest of the family."

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE MEDICAL DINNER.

A FEW years since, I remember seeing in one of the newspapers, the *Times*, I believe, a leading article on the medical profession. It described its members, although intimately connected with the community at large, as a society or commonwealth by themselves, apart from all others, having its own particular literature, and customs, and opinions. The description was perfectly correct. However doctors may proverbially disagree in opinion, there exists among them an extraordinary "*esprit de corps*." This is never shown more clearly than at a professional dinner, where the most perfect freemasonry invariably exists, and where a non-medical man would find himself as much at a loss as among a tribe of South Sea islanders. Among the amusements they possess there is none in more estimation than these dinners. As Morton had returned in good health, I was relieved from attending to his practice; I therefore determined, as some little reward for my exertions, to give a dinner to half-a-dozen of my fellow-students. The day was fixed, and I fortunately met with but one excuse. Morton my readers already know, and I would willingly introduce the others, but, as I have not their permission to give their opinions to the public under their own names, I will merely designate them as A. B. C. D.

Dr. A—— is a physician of eminence attached to a west-end hospital. He is much patronised by the aristocracy, and has an unlimited faith in them in

return ; he is a most benevolent man, and in politics an uncompromising Tory. B——, on the contrary, is a surgeon in large practice attached to a city hospital, and holding the whole aristocracy, both of wealth and birth, in the greatest detestation, for what he considers as their unjust and selfish treatment of the poor : an excellent physiologist, somewhat too much addicted to statistics, which he thrusts on every one who will listen to them. With all his faults, he is, in reality, a most honourable and humane man. Dr. C—— holds the appointment of medical officer of health to a large eastern district of the metropolis. He is a man of great scientific and general learning, but interferes with little beyond his profession, perfectly indifferent to both Whig and Tory, except that part of the ministry attached to the Poor-Law Board for the time being, which invariably excites his indignation, whatever class of politics they may be of. D—— is an apothecary in large practice in the city.

The dinner was excellent, and passed off most agreeably. The conversation was animated, principally upon old professors and fellow-pupils, and it was only when the dessert was brought upon the table that it fell upon general subjects.

In the course of the evening, I mentioned the case of the poor girl in the last chapter. On one point, my guests were unanimous in their opinion—namely, that the indifference of the government to the subject was a disgrace to a civilized community. One only differed from the rest in any point of the subject, and he not as regarded the neglect of the authorities.

“I certainly,” said Dr. A——, “blame the government for not keeping the demoralization within proper bounds. To suppress it, I hold to be impossible. From the habits and manners of the lower classes, repugnant as they are to all decent feeling, much amelioration cannot be expected ; but still vice ought to have its limits. That it increases, is clear to every



man accustomed to hospital practice, and we have only to look to the police reports and prison returns to find that its masculine relatives, theft and intoxication, with their collaterals, augment in the same proportion.

"To what do you attribute it?" I asked.

"I look upon it as the natural consequence of over-population. The poor, principally from similarity of tastes, naturally congregate together; and, as civilization and refinement progress with the refined and educated classes, they, from their peculiar habits, sink in the same proportion."

"Do you not think," B—— asked, "that their degradation may in some measure be caused by the upper classes themselves. Any other than a society of medical men might accept your proposition, but you know perfectly well that depravity can find a home in the higher as well as the lower portion of society."

Dr. A——. "I do not consider the demoralization of the lower classes in any manner caused by the vices of the higher, on the contrary, I consider a large proportion of the failings of the aristocracy caused by the extreme readiness with which the lower classes administer to their failings; while the example the aristocracy show to the world, is one that the poor ought to imitate."

B——. "Family prayers and as much virtue as is necessary to expel a poor frail serving girl, whom they have exposed to the continual proximity and fellowship of their male servants, with a strict prohibition against matrimony in their establishment."

Dr. A——. "You may sneer, B——, at family prayers and virtuous indignation, but I maintain, there is not a more pious or virtuous community in this world than is to be found in the families of the English upper classes."

"But," I asked, "to what do you attribute the demoralization of the lower classes?"

Dr. A——. "As I said before, to the bad example

set before them, and to the depraved society they are accustomed to mix with from their earliest youth. How can it be otherwise, when every vice is openly practised among them, and, unless the police interfere, with little or no reprobation. What inquiries does a mother make when she takes a room in a house? Does she ask what may be the character of the other inmates, or what may probably be the associates for her own daughter? What inquiries does the father make as to the probability of there being boys in an adjoining house that might tempt his own to do wrong? None; I say none. I have myself seen the prostitute talking at the gin-shop door with the young girl yet uncontaminated. I have seen the son in close fellowship with the thief fresh from the crank. The father will drink unhesitatingly with the returned convict, and the mother will allow herself to be assisted in her household work by the known and drunken prostitute, without the slightest appearance of annoyance or displeasure. What amusements occupy their leisure hours? For the men, the public-house. In that consists the whole of their enjoyment. Their wives, it is true, may occasionally induce them to treat them to the Victoria or Surrey theatres; this also is the acmé of delight with their children. And what examples do they receive in these precious seminaries of vice, where the basest and most profligate resort—where the mind of youth is taught theoretically those lessons which are practiced with impunity by the majority of the audience. Are the upper classes or the Government to blame for this? I maintain they are not. Every thing that human wisdom could suggest, or wealth and charity accomplish, is put in action. Think in the last twenty years how many churches have been erected for their spiritual welfare—how many schools for their instruction. Beyond these, consider the vast sums that have been spent in metropolitan improvements, in draining, in baths and washhouses, and other sanitary improve-

ments. Then, to these, add the enormous wealth subscribed and spent by different religious associations, such as the Bible Society, the Religious Tract Society, the Additional Curates' Fund, the Church Building Society, and many others of the same description; and can any man of common candour blame the better classes for want of sympathy and charity? Now, let me ask, what has been the effect? Our hospitals prove that, even now, immorality is on the increase, and theft and drunkenness keep pace, pressing on, step for step. Let any man visit a low neighbourhood on a Sabbath morning, and what does he find? Why, less public regard for the day than is shown in any continental city, without the form of spending half an hour at the mass. Groups of working men may be seen congregating round the public-house doors, ready to enter as soon as the church service shall be over; near the church door you find none, or, perhaps, a few boys who are occupied tossing for halfpence, till driven away by the policeman, qualifying themselves for the low betting-shops; though, by the bye, these last, thanks to the Government, have been put down. Look at the women you meet with, they are all of one stamp, and appear all of one profession. The last night's paint is still on their cheeks—the last night's gin is still in their breath, and the week's dirt still on their dress. With hair dishevelled, with their persons exposed, they warm themselves in the sun, or exchange obscene terms of recognition with the crowd round the gin-shop door, petitioning for a drop when the church worship shall be over, and their own begin. That this state of things exists, you all know, and I defy any man among you to prove it to be other than the fault of their own demoralized natures."

"Let me try," said Morton. "As it will greatly assist me in my argument, I will admit nearly all you state of the condition of the working classes to be correct—at least of a large portion of them; but I maintain they

are the victims of an infamous code of laws, and that, bad as their morals may be, those of the higher classes are equally open to reprobation. You taunt them with their love of the public-house, and that of their wives and children for the minor theatres. You might go still further, and name the penny theatres—though, thanks to the vigilance of the police, very few of them are to be found in the present day. Let me ask what other amusements are open to them? ‘Home!’ perhaps, you would say? Go into one of their homes—I speak of that of the labourer—and what do you find it? Can imagination conceive anything more miserable or squalid? A foetid small room is, perhaps, all the accommodation they can obtain for four or five individuals. Sometimes I have seen eight in a room not more than ten feet square. It is impossible to stop demoralisation in these crowded dwellings; and is not that, may I ask, the fault of the Legislature? Has any improvement taken place in London, of which one of its objects at least, if not the only one, has been to drive the poor man from his home? While the population was increasing rapidly, during the last half-century, was any accommodation made for their reception? No; during that time, thousands—ay, tens of thousands—of their dwellings were destroyed by successive acts of the Legislature; and have one hundred been rebuilt? Has one Act of Parliament been passed to oblige the wealthy to build fit and proper habitations for them? In one parish (Whitechapel), in twenty years the population had increased by twelve thousand souls; but, during that time, two thousand houses of the poor had been destroyed, and not twenty of them have been rebuilt. The nobleman, if he turns his dogs from one kennel, sees that another is provided for them. He, by birth, is a legislator; has he ever shown a like consideration for the poor of the metropolis? Trace the amount of demoralization it has occasioned, and

then say whether the blame lies with the Legislature or the poor. Consider the crowded state they must be in, and is it to be wondered that the father leaves the house if he has the opportunity? Poverty naturally takes to the gin-shop. There is gaiety, light, and warmth in the tap-room, and temporary happiness—or, with many of them, its equivalent—oblivion in the gin. Those among them possessed of money are fond of the theatre, it is true; but have you given a just description of those establishments? By comparison, I maintain that the wealthy might gain by imitating their superior morality. Smile, if you please, but I can prove it. Let us take a few favourite theatrical representations among the rich. In the first place, there is ‘*Lucrezia Borgia*.’ This, even in France—generally most unprejudiced in matters of the kind—was considered too infamous for performance, and Donizetti’s music was adapted to another subject before it was allowed to be produced. The plot turns on the incestuous love of an infamous woman for her own son, and the murders that take place are the effects of the intrigue. Do you think such a plot would be admired or allowed by the audience of the Victoria? Would the ‘gush of love,’ as a newspaper had it, when describing *Lucrezia’s* cavatina, be complimented by them? The murder scene might suit their tastes, but that, also, must have been considerably altered, and the hangman introduced before the curtain fell, instead of leaving the murderess an object of sympathy. Take the second act of the ballet of ‘*Esmeralda*,’ or the second act of the ‘*Tarentella*,’ and you must admit that it is little farther that obscenity can go. But, perhaps, you say that these are not understood by the audience. Let us look at the French theatre—another aristocratic place of amusement. All the upper classes understand the language. Among the most favourite pieces is the ‘*Premieres armes de*

*Richelieu.*" From the moment the curtain draws up to the end of the piece it is one continued current of depravity and obscenity."

Dr. A——. "I do not remember it."

Morton. "Well, I will give you a slight sketch of the plot, and a very slight one will suffice. The king is enamoured of a young lady, but, as she is of a noble family, her reputation must not suffer, and she is married to the young Duke of Richelieu—a boy of fourteen or fifteen years of age. As soon as the ceremony was over, it was intended he should start on his travels with his tutor, but his wife was to remain in Paris. The young gentleman, however, is exceedingly precocious, and refuses to leave his bride, whereupon two of the noblemen of the court amuse themselves by ridiculing the youthful husband, using allusions of the broadest and most obscene nature. Richelieu, however, determines to revenge himself on his tormentors, which he accomplishes by establishing a criminal intrigue with each of their wives. He then contrives to make the husbands aware of the fact, and on these disgusting incidents turns the whole plot of the piece. Now, imagine this put upon the stage of the Victoria, with the equivalent expressions and puns in English, and I have no hesitation in saying that the audience would not hear it to the end. And yet I have seen the *elite* of our female aristocracy listening to it with their husbands and daughters, and they were apparently delighted with the performance. If you doubt it, look at the fashionable intelligence in the newspapers any morning after it has been played. In the minor theatres—those principally frequented by the poor—it is singular to observe how often a stupid scene is redeemed by some old piece of virtuous clap-trap. Any allusion to a poor man restoring to its owner a lost sum of money; the devotion of a wife to her husband; the affection of a daughter for her mother, or the protection of the innocent, are sure to

be rapturously applauded, when the same sentiments would be passed over with indifference, or probably sneered at, at a fashionable theatre. That there exists a vast amount of juvenile depravity, is but too true; but how is it caused? The poor, by the action of our infamous laws, are driven to reside in certain localities. Males and females are necessarily crowded together in the most revolting manner. Is it, then, to be wondered at that morality is frequently at a low ebb. Of this you may be assured, that poverty, and not innate depravity, is, in the majority of cases, the parent both of juvenile prostitution and juvenile theft. This fact is easily proved. The young London thief possesses three distinctive characteristics. He is of a stunted growth, narrow chested, and has remarkably small muscular development, showing indisputably the privations of his own childhood, and the poverty of his parents. If you doubt it, ask T—— to take you over the Westminster Reformatory, and you may easily satisfy yourself on the subject; and, if you ask any police inspector, he will confirm what I say."

B——. "I can bear witness to the fact that the juvenile prostitutes present exactly the same peculiarities, and that the amount of this vice increases in proportion to the poverty of the district, the ages of these poor children being the less as the poverty of the parish is the greater."

D——. "F——, the dentist, pointed out to me singular fact in proof of the prejudicial effects of intense poverty in the parents upon the constitution of their children. He has been attached for twenty-five years to the —— Hospital. During that time, the neighbourhood has become gradually poorer, and, as poverty has increased, he has noticed that caries had become more frequent in the second teeth of children, some among the poorest having scarcely a sound tooth in their heads at twelve or fourteen years of age. I can also bear you

out in your opinion that poverty is the parent of vice in poor neighbourhoods. There is, perhaps, no part of the metropolis where more abject poverty is to be found than in some of the Whitechapel parishes. There the poor are, in a great measure, obliged to relieve each other. There vice is so common that I am assured by one of the guardians of the poor, that it is heart-rending to see the number of these poor girls that are nightly turned from their workhouse ; but that, large as the building is, without any figure of speech, it has not room enough to hold them. Again, I have it on the authority of several of the district clergy that a large proportion of prostitution and thieving in the neighbourhood is caused by its abject poverty.

Dr. A——. “If they attended a little more to the spiritual welfare of their flocks, and left statistics and poor laws alone, the amount might probably be less.”

D——. “There you do them a great injustice. Never were men in this world more zealous in the discharge of their duties. Badly paid and hardly worked as they are, the patience, humanity, and courage they exhibit is truly astonishing. Yes, courage ; for although the medical man may set the danger of fever and infection at naught, it requires no small amount of determination on the part of the non-professional man to meet it in the forms it occasionally assumes in these localities.

“But,” resumed Morton, “you must not imagine that while I admit a greater amount of immorality to exist among the young females in poor localities than is to be found among the wealthier classes, caused, I maintain, by the cruel laws affecting the poor, that the working classes, as a body, have not a redeeming characteristic. Nothing can surpass the astonishing amount of conjugal affection and fidelity among the married women. In no class is the sanctity of the marriage vow regarded with greater respect. The patience, the privation, and industry these women will



show is truly wonderful, especially if they receive the smallest consideration or affection in return. With respect to fidelity, I unhesitatingly state, that no women in this world lead purer lives than the wives of the working classes."

"Bravo, Morton!" said Dr. A——. "You will next, I suppose, be holding their males up as models of gentlemanly behaviour!"

Morton. "I have no intention of the kind; but, at the same time, I assure you that the elements of gentlemanly conduct are far more abundant in them than you seem to imagine. I had a specimen of it as I came here this afternoon. A ragged lad with a broom in his hand, ran by my side the whole length of a street, begging for a halfpenny. At last we arrived at a muddy crossing. 'I will give you nothing,' I said, 'you are a lazy fellow, and, instead of begging, you ought to sweep this crossing.'

"'Can't, Sir, it's booked,' said he.

"'What do you mean?' said I.

"'Another chap's got it.'

"'How do you know that?' I inquired.

"'He's left his broom agin that post, and we never goes there then; it would not be fair.'

"Now A——, you may laugh, but I consider the essentials of gentlemanly feeling are to be found in that poor lad, and in every one of his class holding the same sentiments.

Dr. A——. "But still you have not touched on the utter want of self-respect shown by the working-classes, not only in associating with bad characters themselves, but also in allowing their children unrestrainedly to do the same. Say what you will, it is impossible that an utterly demoralized feeling must not be the effect."

Morton. "In the first place, I by no means admit that they take no care in restraining their children from associating with bad characters; on the contrary,

I know they are most anxious to prevent such a thing — especially the mothers, who are in continual anxiety on the subject. But in what manner is the separation to be effected? By the action of our infamous poor laws they are condemned to herd together, and the caution of their parents frequently brings about the acquaintance the sooner by stimulating their curiosity. When a season of privation occurs to the family, there is very little difficulty in turning the half-starved boy into a thief, especially with those ready to instruct him close at hand. But, A——, do you come into court, on the part of the aristocracy, with clean hands? In the upper circles is vice considered a reason for excluding an individual from associating with his fellows; or are the respectable, as a body, considered to be contaminated by the contiguity? I have myself seen an Hon. and Rev., night after night, in the same box with a broken-down opera dancer, and she, in her own phraseology, almost as good as married to him. He mixed without animadversion in good society. What do you say to the late Marquis of Hertford, to the still living —— and ——, worthies of the same school? So extensive is their church patronage, that, assuming the Church of England to be the true church, an Apostle of our Saviour could not preach his Master's Gospel to a population of one hundred and seventy thousand souls in these islands, without first asking and obtaining their permissions. I remember once disgusting a Rev. Dean of pure Georgian church and state principles, by asking what he thought of a certain richly-endowed clerical appointment that had notoriously been obtained through the influence of a king's mistress. He answered, with offended dignity, "that these things were evidently given us to test our faith." Again, very lately, we have seen the perpetual presentation to a valuable living bequeathed by a nobleman to a most questionable patronage, without exciting the smallest indignation in the higher circles. But, perhaps, the

strongest case of all is that of a certain nobleman whose conduct has called down the animadversion of nine-tenths of the middle-classes. He is honoured in the highest manner by the Government, and mixes with his aristocratic fellows—judges, lords, and bishops—without a single mark of disapprobation beyond the political party-feeling usual in the legislative circle.”

Dr. A——. “I believe that nobleman to have been most unjustly treated. The crimes the newspaper press has led the public to believe he has perpetrated, are too absurd to require refutation.”

“I said nothing about crime ; I spoke simply of the immoral aspect of the affair. I have not the slightest belief that a crime has been committed ; but, as a medical man, I maintain that the *prima facie* cause of suspicion against Dove and Palmer, hardly called more strongly for judicial investigation than this.”

Dr. A——. “Dove gave the strongest evidence against himself, and Palmer was a gambler, and, consequently, a suspicious character.”

Morton. “You had better have left the question of gambling alone, A——. But you spoke of a love of gaming as innate among the lower orders. Pray does it not exist equally in the higher ? Are not the bets on horses as regularly quoted as any other species of investment ? Not only are they so, but it would take little difficulty to prove that no inconsiderable portion of those bets are made on the Sabbath afternoon, to the perfect knowledge, if not with the connivance, of the police. But the spirit of gambling extends far beyond horse-racing. In no way is it more disgustingly developed than in those licensed betting-shops—the insurance offices. That a man may make a prudential insurance for the benefit of his family, is just enough ; but the wholesale system of betting and fraud carried on by these offices is a disgrace to the Government of the country. There is hardly a probability in human life that is not made the subject of a bet in these dens.

Not only is the life of A. wagered against that of B., but the odds are influenced by A.'s last attack of *delirium tremens*, and these, perhaps, are counterbalanced by B.'s predisposition to consumption. Perhaps, too, the wager is to the effect that B., with his constitution broken down by depravity, will not outlive his mother. Again, B. urges as a reason for taking the bet—or insurance, as it is called—that his mother's health is most precarious. Inquiries of the most minute description are made as to whether her present symptoms will terminate in cancer; the poor woman's statement to her medical man, *sub sigilla confessionis*, is purchased for the sum of one guinea, under a solemn promise of secrecy, and the odds on the event are carefully calculated. The whole circumstance is, of course, told to the body of directors in confidence, and, when the documents have been filled up, they are given to the clerks to be registered.

B——. "I can bear you out, Morton, in your statement. I am concerned for an insurance company that transacts a great amount of business, with a large wealthy reversionary society, and the cases I meet with of scions of the aristocracy attempting to raise money from them on contingent securities, would astonish not only their parents, but the world at large, if they were made known. It is perfectly disgusting to see what eagerness these young men show in proving that a parent or relative from whose death they have expectations, and to whom they owe a debt of gratitude, is incurably afflicted with a disease that shall cut short their existence; and how they crave for a larger advance of money on account of the fact. But, perhaps the most revolting feature in this system of gambling is, betting on the probability of issue. I heard this morning of a younger brother calling at a reversionary office to borrow money on what appeared, at first sight, a remote contingency. His elder brother had been married a twelvemonth, with no chance of a

family ; and he had just heard from a party, whose information could not be doubted, that he was in a rapid consumption, and could not live six months. As the young man was next heir, the security was a good one. 'The reversionary office,' he said, 'could easily hedge the bet by insuring against his possibility of issue.'

Dr. A——. "I admit all this is most disgusting and disgraceful. I was lately required by an insurance office to furnish them with information respecting the probability of issue in the case of a lady aged forty-two, who was my patient, and also was on the eve of marriage. I was assured, at the same time, that my communication should be considered perfectly confidential. I went with considerable indignation to the office, and asked to see the secretary. He seemed greatly surprised at my excitement, told me the thing was done every day, and informed me that he had that morning taken an insurance on the probability of male issue not arriving at majority from a contemplated marriage ; and that not only the consumptive tendency of the young lady herself, and the deaths of her two parents from the same disease, were data in the calculation, but also the pre-nuptial depravity of the bridegroom himself. I perfectly agree with you that Government ought to inquire into the whole system."

Morton. "One reason of their non-interference is, that there is hardly an insurance office that has not one, and occasionally several, members of the Legislature on its direction ; and on the boards of many of the least reputable may be found men of the greatest promise at the bar. It has often appeared to me the height of absurdity that a barrister should be applying every term of just indignation to some miserable scoundrel who has kept a betting office, when, at the same time, he himself is officiating as a director of a second-rate insurance company not one jot more scrupulous in taking a bet, or less dishonest in getting out of it."

D——. "You are hard upon the bar, Morton."

Morton. "They are hard enough upon us when we have not the power of answering them, let us have our revenge."

The conversation was stopped by B—— leaving us, as he had to prepare a lecture for his class next day. "Have you ever," he said, "been over our hospital?"

"No ;" I replied, "I have not, but I should much like to do so."

"Come any morning at twelve o'clock, and I will show it you ; and if you should have half an hour to spare on the same day, I will tell you some of the reasons that have made me the Radical they say I am."

"And as you appear," C—— said, "to interest yourself in the condition of the poor, if you will call on me any morning before eleven, I will prove to you that there exists in the eastern districts an amount of poverty, demoralization, and misery, that shall be unsurpassed in any capital in Europe."

I accepted both invitations, and my friends left me.

## CHAPTER XIII.

VISIT TO THE EAST-END—DESTRUCTION OF THE DWELLINGS  
OF THE POOR—ITS EFFECTS—THE WOMAN IN CHILD-  
BED—POOR-LAW HUMANITY.

I PAID my visit to C—— about a week after the dinner. He first conducted me over the St. Catherine's Docks, one of those establishments that perhaps strike the foreigner with more wonder than any of the grandest monuments of the metropolis. A description of the immense wealth they contain would appear absurdly fabulous, if narrated in the "Arabian Nights or Tales of the Genii." To estimate it appeared impossible. "I have first brought you here," said C——, "that you might form some idea of the immense wealth contained in these districts, and then you will be better able to judge of the profound poverty that surrounds them. Cast your eyes around, and then calculate, if you can, the immense riches that must be possessed by the owners of the shipping and merchandise that you see. The number of men employed merely in loading and unloading these vessels, without counting sailors, cannot be less than three thousand; most of them are married and with families. I do not exaggerate when I say, that at least ten thousand souls are dependent on this Dock for their daily bread. Now, imagine a season of commercial distress, a hard frost, or a long continuance of easterly winds, and you will easily believe that an immense amount of misery will ensue. These poor creatures do not, on an average, possess in goods and money more than enough for three days' subsistence, and you would naturally conclude that their employers,

who profit so largely by their labours, would be called upon to contribute to their relief, especially as these Docks are within the Whitechapel Union. Such, however, is not the case. The proprietors of the Dock do not reside in the district, but they own the whole parish of St. Catherine, and are consequently exempted from relieving any of the other poor in the Union. To keep up the value of their shares, they allow no working men to reside on their property, and consequently their contribution to the relief of the misery they create is merely a trifle in proportion to their wealth. The other employers, the merchants and ship-owners, have their counting-houses in the adjoining city parish, where no poor can find a dwelling; and as they are not obliged to contribute to the support of their destitute labourers, treat the misery they often create with the most perfect indifference."

"Who, then, supports them in their distress?" I inquired.

"There are some few manufactories in the neighbourhood that contribute largely. One sugar refiner pays four times the amount of poor-rate levied on the Bank of England. But the principal portion is paid by the poor themselves. A large proportion of the population of this Union are Spitalfields weavers; and they assist, to a considerable extent, in relieving the dock labourers. These latter, if in work themselves, assist the weavers in the hour of their distress; while the merchant, manufacturer, and consumer are all absolved by our iniquitous poor-laws from the consequences of their avarice and reckless over-trading. Nothing is more common in this district than for a distress to be levied upon the goods in a house while a portion of its inmates are receiving parochial relief."

"Are the poor, in times of sickness, well attended to?" I inquired.

"They are not sufficiently cared for, but in that respect they are much better off than in the generality



of London parishes. But here, again, may be quoted another instance of the injustice so systematically perpetrated on the poor of this metropolis. On the space at present occupied by these docks, formerly stood a charitable institution known as St. Catherine's Hospital. The Dock Company were, of course, obliged to compensate the trust to its full value; and St. Catherine, like a good many other city saints, was an excellent hand at a bargain. She not only demanded, but received, something between £150,000 and £200,000 in compensation for the injury done to her poor; and with this money in her possession, located herself in the fashionable district of Regent's Park. There, under the auspices of her late Majesty Queen Adelaide, and with the sanction of the Court of Chancery, she opened her doors to at least twelve old ladies and gentlemen of quality; and likewise dispensed instruction in reading and writing to double the number of poor children. Her income of some six thousand pounds a year is absorbed in that manner; and I have heard, and fully believe, that the brother of a wealthy nobleman, receives out of the funds of a charity that, in the opinion of most men, ought to be applied to the sick and starving poor of this Union, no less a sum than £1,200 a year, for seeing that a dozen broken-down people of quality make themselves comfortable. This sum, it should be remembered, is larger than all that is applied to the parish medical attendance and medicines of all the sick poor in the whole of the eastern districts collectively."

"A very frequent excuse for the present poor-law is," I remarked, "that the question does not interest the poor, and that it is simply a tax that falls upon the landlord—that wherever the poor-rate is high the rents are low, so that both the rate-payer and the poor are not injured by the increase in the rates. Is this the case?"

"It would be difficult to say," C— answered, "whether

the statement is the more remarkable for its absurdity or its falsehood. In the first place, a large proportion of the ratepayers are shopkeepers. As the population in these districts is composed principally of the working classes, it naturally follows in seasons of distress that trade decreases as the poor-rate increases. Again, invariably as the poor-rate of a parish becomes heavier, the wealthier ratepayers leave the neighbourhood, and the traffic their residence would occasion is lost ; but if you are not tired we will walk through some of the streets, and then you can judge for yourself."

We first walked up the whole length of Commercial-street. "A few years since," said C., "the whole of this space was densely covered with the dwellings of the working classes. Nearly seven hundred houses have been destroyed to make this thoroughfare, and at least a thousand more to form St. Catherine's docks. If we include the number pulled down for the Blackwall and Eastern Counties Railways, it will make a total of not less than two thousand ; and I unhesitatingly state, that not two hundred have been built in their room. So great has been the demand for labour, that the population numbers at least twelve thousand more than it did twenty years since. And this increase has been effected principally by recruits from the country, or working men and their families from other metropolitan parishes. They are now, as you may imagine, crowded together in the most frightful manner."

"In what way," I asked, "do you prove your numbers to be correct, for your statement amounts to almost a mathematical impossibility."

"Not at all," he answered. "The houses formerly occupied by respectable merchants and tradesmen are now let out in single rooms to the working classes, and if you knew how heavy is the amount of rent they pay, you would see how absurd it is to call it a landlord question. I have frequently found an eight-roomed house, let out in this manner, producing nearly a hun-

dred a-year in rent from the lodgers. The want of proper house accommodation is a frightful tax on the working classes.

"But," I remarked, "if this has been continued for twenty years, the increase of population by children alone would render such a state of things an impossibility."

"On the contrary, the population is in a great measure kept down to the number required for adult labour by the enormous sacrifice of infantile life the system occasions. Now," he continued. "look at that lane. I am certain that every room in it is tenanted by at least five individuals, including children; how is it possible that the majority of them can live? And those who do survive, do it with weakly constitutions, and are a perpetual curse to themselves, and a heavy tax to the ratepayer."

"Do you find that poverty in your district has much effect on the morals of the community?"

"An effect of the most detrimental description. We abound to such an extent in young thieves, that it is almost an impossibility to walk the distance we have to-day without an attempt being made upon our pockets. The pickpockets are all alike—weak, sickly, half-starved lads, or men so slightly built that all labourious employment is unfit for them. But the most lamentable effects of our poverty are on young girls. The age of many of those poor lost creatures is so young that it fills one with horror to think of it. From the tardy natural development of the English female child, and the privations the humbler classes are subjected to, there is no purer creature on the face of God's earth than the poor working man's daughter as nature has made her; yet there is perhaps no capital in Europe where so much demoralisation exists among them as a class. To poverty, and poverty alone, in nine cases out of ten, can this effect be traced."

"Now we are here," he said, "I should like

to see a poor woman that I am attending for a friend. It is not in my own district, but it is not far off, and if you would like to accompany me, you will see an excellent specimen of the working of our poor-laws." I readily assented, and he immediately turned into a street that presented an appearance of the most squalid poverty. The window-frames seemed falling to pieces, and I am sure that each, on an average, did not hold more than one whole pane of glass. The weather was kept out in the remainder either by stuffing rags and old hats into the spaces left by the glass falling out, or by pasting pieces of paper over them. Dirt, as usual, accompanied poverty, and the whole street was nearly black with the accumulated soot and mud. The children, as usual, bore the stamp of the locality. Their faces, apparently unwashed for many days together, hid from the eye of the casual observer the gauntness of hunger, but the sharp bones visible through the rags that covered them told too well how little had been expended on their food. Some eight or nine had collected together round a lamp-post, and, with a wretched mockery of childish playfulness, had gathered together a few oyster-shells, and were occupied in attempting to form them into some figures on the ground; but there was no joy in their play. Their faces showed a sharp earnestness, and they occasionally spoke to each other, in a snappish, quarrelsome tone; but not a laugh, not a smile, escaped them. When half-way down the street, we turned into a court where, evidently, at least an equal amount of misery existed. We entered a house, and, in a small room on the first floor, found his patient. She was lying on a bed of rags on the floor. The day was bitterly cold, yet (although there was no fire in the grate), she was well covered up. One thing struck me as most singular. The heap of clothes upon her seemed to consist principally of wearing apparel of the most mixed description. Two gowns in tatters; a

petticoat scarcely better ; the flannel coat of a brewer's drayman, now doubtless repudiated by its wearer, for it was torn and dirty ; and an old, worn cloak, were among the number. There was no table in the room ; a broken chair supplied its place. A saucer, with a spoon in it, and a large phial from the workhouse containing wine, were the principal features of the other furniture in the room. Besides the sick woman, there was another in the room. She was nursing a half-starved, sickly infant herself, but had come in to assist her fellow-lodger. C—— went round the bed, towards the window, to get a better light to see his patient. She was pale as a corpse, her eye was sunk, and her cheek hollow. "How are you to-day, said C—— ?" No answer. "Do you find yourself better ?" said he, stooping down.

"Yes," answered the patient, faintly.

"Has she taken the wine ?" asked C—— of the other woman.

"Yes, Sir, and she has had the arrowroot."

"How is the child ?" inquired C——.

No answer. The patient turned her face to her pillow, and a convulsive movement of the shoulders showed us she was crying. C—— looked at the nurse, and the woman returned his gaze. Not a word was spoken by either.

"I will go to the relieving officer, and get him to send you some more wine and arrowroot, as well as food," said C——. "Let her have it as soon as it arrives. I will see her again to-morrow." We then left the room.

"Now," said C——, when we were fairly in the street, "there is a specimen of our poor-law administration ; and, with all our boasted philanthropy, I believe it would be impossible to find a system more infamous in any other city in Europe. With most, misery is a misfortune ; with us, it is a law. Where no poor-laws are to be found, men appeal to charity for relief ; but charity is, in a great measure, shut out by

our system, which allows the greatest inhumanity in the application of the relief it professes to administer. This poor woman is an example. Her husband was a labourer in a factory not very far off, and earned about thirteen shillings a week. Six months since he was attacked with typhus fever. Of course the few things they possessed were sold or pledged to pay for the necessaries he required. The fever over, the parish refused further relief, and while yet in the earliest stage of convalescence, he was obliged to return to his work, and the result was, he had a relapse and died. His wife was confined about a week since. She was attended by a midwife, and three days ago I heard of the case. When I called I found the poor creature nearly starved; indeed, I believe she would have died from want but for the humanity of her fellow-lodgers. She positively had but the sheet to cover her; and, as you may remember, the cold weather was just setting in. I wrote to the Union, requesting some blankets and bedding might be sent, as well as wine and food. A small portion of arrowroot, some wine in a phial, and a loaf of bread arrived; but, instead of the bedding, a note saying that they were quite willing to take her into the house, but that it was against the law to furnish my other requisitions. I naturally felt very angry, and wrote again, saying the poor woman was too ill to be removed; but it was of no use, the blankets were peremptorily refused."

"How did she obtain the clothes that cover her?" I asked.

"When the weather became so very severe, the neighbours made a collection for her of what clothes they could spare, and the various specimens you saw was the result. A poor long-shore man, who, having obtained work could warm himself at it, lent her the pilot coat; and the widow of a brewer's drayman lent her the coat that had for some years done duty as her family quilt. So you see that the poor in our parishes

positively depend upon each other for relief, for even when the assistance comes from the Union, the greater portion of the rates are paid by them. In this instance my patient is depending on the charity of those scarcely better off than herself, while the wealthy Jew at the head of the company that employed her husband is totally exempt, either morally or legally, from contributing to her necessities."

"Do you not think that a far greater amount of charitable feeling exists among the poor than you find among the wealthier classes?" I inquired.

"So much so, that I believe if it were otherwise the mortality among the poor in seasons of distress would be too terrible to contemplate. The untiring affection, patience, and friendship that exist among them surpasses belief. If we had the time I could give you many such instances as that you have just seen, but we must defer it till another opportunity, as I am obliged to meet another medical man in consultation some distance off, and I have hardly time to keep my appointment. Any other morning that you have to spare I will readily go with you further into the subject."

## CHAPTER XIV.

INDIGENT CHILDREN—THE HOSPITAL—CROWDED DWELLINGS—THE EFFECTS OF THE POOR LAW—SYMPATHY OF THE POOR LAW BOARD FOR WOMEN DURING THEIR CONFINEMENTS—ABUSE OF EDUCATIONAL TRUSTS.

AFTER a few days' rest, I determined on visiting B—— at the Hospital. The morning was fine, and I went on foot. On crossing the road in New Farringdon Street, I stopped for some minutes to watch the swarms of children that covered the large extent of waste ground in that locality. The sun shone brilliantly for the first time for some weeks, and the temperature of the atmosphere was mild and agreeable. I think I never saw so large a collection of children—certainly never any so poor. Among the hundreds there present, I did not see one respectably clad. All were dirty, and some almost naked. That beautiful rotundity of limb so much admired in healthy, well-fed children, was wanting in them all. There was no joy: the loud thrilling laugh of childhood was not heard among them. The females of eight years of age were almost all employed in nursing other children, and some, so diminutive as to appear not to have seen more than five summers, had often some wretched sickly infant in their arms. The boys showed no disposition for play. They either sat together in some spot where they could gaze upon the sun, or were engaged in apparently serious, or at any rate joyless, conversation. Others still came upon the ground, emerging from courts and lanes, so dismal in appearance, that even the bright sunshine was powerless on their abject misery. The sight was inexpressibly painful. Among the youngest, I could point out many



to whom no skill could insure a twelve months' existence. Creatures whose short life was one continued act of dying.

It would be difficult to say whether on some of those on whom death had set his seal, the expression of countenance was the more beautiful or painful. Dirty as they were, a loveliness would occasionally shine through it that no words could describe. One child cleaner than the rest particularly riveted my attention. She was a girl, of perhaps ten years of age. Her fair, clear skin was rendered more transparent by privation, and perhaps paler from living in the dark room her mother probably occupied. Her large, mild blue eye had in it the bright clearness of consumption; and when I spoke to her, a smile, so lovely, so unearthly, lighted up her face, that it appeared as if, while yet alive, the angel spirit was detaching itself from her body. Life was evidently slowly fading. Many among them might live on, but what a puberty awaited them. The girls, with such terrible temptations before them, what will be their fate? The boys, weakly and ill-formed, with no constitution for labour, who will employ them? And those who live till they are married, what will be the lot of their children? Their parents' constitution, still more debilitated, will be transmitted to them, and in another generation all trace of them will be lost. Though not of a melancholy disposition, my eyes filled with tears as I watched them, and though unwilling to leave them, I felt relieved when I quitted the scene.

I arrived at the Hospital, and inquired for B——. He was occupied in lecturing to his class, and I waited till it was over. He then took me over the wards. Everything that skill and science could do to alleviate misery appeared to be carried out in the most effectual manner. Everything necessary for disease or accident that wealth could procure was forthcoming; yet not the slightest waste or extravagance was to be found

in any part of that immense establishment. After passing through the wards, we visited the theatres, the dispensary, with all its complicated but accurate arrangements, the room for surgical appliances, and the various departments for cooking and domestic management. The whole appeared one admirable piece of mechanism, without any portion of it ever being out of order. As each hour struck, some fresh duty began. The head of the establishment might be in any part of the metropolis, and by looking at his watch, know everything which at that moment was passing in any part of the building. At last we visited the rooms containing the patients waiting for admission, and those expecting the visit of the assistant-physician or surgeon of the day. Here, without difficulty, I could trace the adolescence of the children I had lately seen in the street. To these were added a number of sickly-looking women, with infants in their arms, and frequently accompanied by one or two scarcely able to walk. Many were there on whom no trace of sickness could be discovered—these, I was told, were friends of others sick at home, and had out of friendship come with some message, or to ask some question relating to the children, or the remedy for the absent patient. Others were there with children not their own, but who, out of kindness to some poor mother—who was too much employed or too weak to attend herself—had brought the little sufferer for advice. The number of females greatly predominated over the males. Among the latter, youths of weakly constitutions were the most numerous.

On leaving the building, I asked B—— what class of diseases principally afflicted those we had left? He told me those caused by poverty were by far the greatest number; its ramifications are so numerous that at least 65 per cent. of the diseases, and a large proportion of the accidents, might directly or indirectly be traced to it. The sickly constitutions of the younger children, the profligacy of the youths of both sexes, and the

effects of intoxication in the middle-aged, can all claim it as their common parent. Children born of sickly parents, and bred in the most unhealthy localities, cannot be strong. The youths accustomed to herd together without the possibility of any of the necessary means of decency, soon become demoralized; and from demoralization to disease is but a step. The number of those suffering from the effects of profligacy surpasses belief. The drunkenness of the old and middle-aged arises equally from the same cause. They either drink to drown sorrow and thought, or swallow the spirits to obtain that warmth which ought to be procured from food and raiment.

"Do you," I inquired, "find the females as demoralized as the males?"

"Equally so; how can it be otherwise? They mix together in common, and imbibe the same ideas from their earliest infancy. They are neglected by the Government, and few take any interest in them when young. The seeds of their contamination are sown at a very early age, and when in infancy, the female child of the poor receives but little sympathy. When thoroughly degraded, their case is often considered, but unfortunately not by those whose influence and example would be the most efficacious. Pious clerks in public offices and penitent naval officers do but little good, although among the most energetic in their endeavours in reclaiming fallen women; while the respectable married woman, whose influence with them would be almost omnipotent, is restrained, from a false notion of delicacy, from interfering in their behalf. When middle-aged or old, all further interest in them ceases. It is really pitiable to see the swarms of female children in this neighbourhood, with their souls as little cared for as their bodies. The clergy, it must be admitted, do all in their power to stay the evil, but their number would be insufficient, even if it were possible for these poor children to profit by their instructions,

so long as they are compelled to live in this horrible manner, brought on by avarice and bad legislation, and permitted without one word of remonstrance by the Poor Law Board. The treatment of those more advanced in years is also most unjust. No sooner is a woman, if poor, past the age of personal attraction, than all consideration for her spiritual or temporal welfare appears to cease. The mind of a woman, at whatever age she may be, often appears to possess the plastic qualities of a child's, and might be moulded like a child's, to good or evil, with almost equal facility. The severest censure is freely heaped upon them for their errors, but not the slightest attempt to reclaim them is ever made, although many of their faults, especially pilfering and intoxication, are the effects of their poverty. But here comes our chaplain, let me introduce you to him, he is an excellent fellow, and has had great experience among the poorer classes."

The chaplain was a mild, gentlemanly-looking man of some forty or forty-five years of age. From the conversation we had with him, he seemed admirably adapted to the duties he had to perform. From constant attendance at the bedside of the sick, he had acquired that perfect self-possession and ease in gaining the confidence of the patients, which characterizes a medical man attached to a large hospital. To these he added an urbanity and kind feeling of manner which gained him immediately the good-will of all with whom he conversed. There was not the slightest particle of cant about him, and when speaking on the subject of his duties, his language was marked by a total abstinence from all ecclesiastical slang. He spoke of his cases with the zeal of a scientific professor, and was as proud of his success in converting the thief, or assisting the Magdalen to obtain respectable employment, as the surgeon or physician would be in attending a patient through a dangerous operation, or curing what was imagined to be a desperate case of fever.

"I was remarking to my friend," said B——, "the little care which is taken of the health and morals of young children. Is it not a pity that the interest felt for young women could not be distributed more equally over the whole sex? As it is, all sympathy and care appears to be absorbed by them, while the children and middle-aged are almost totally neglected."

"I cannot admit," said the chaplain, "that too much care is taken of young women, on the contrary, if there were more, it would be greatly to their advantage. In proof of this, the number of Catholic priests in proportion to the lower orders of their creed, is far greater than that of the Protestant clergy to their poor, and the result is, that there are far fewer of those unhappy fallen women among them than with us. That this arises from the care and teaching of their priests, is easily shown by the fact so often quoted by the surgeons of emigrant ships—that when away from their clergy, they become indifferent to the practice of their religion, and that the Irish Roman Catholics are the most unruly and immoral class of passengers they have to contend with. A still further proof may be obtained by questioning that class of patients in the hospital. You will with great difficulty find a Catholic among them, although the neighbourhood swarms with low Irish."

"But they fill up the measure of their iniquity," said B——, "with lying, quarrelling, and dirt."

"Very possibly; with respect to the female children, you are perfectly right. Their utter neglect, both physical and moral, is one of the crying sins of the day. Depend upon it, the great social evil we hear so much of, will never be stopped so long as misery and neglect are at our thresholds to supply the market. The case of middle-aged women, and especially drunkards, of the lower class is very sad. I can assure you that during my attendance as chaplain in this hospital, I have met with such painful and terrible episodes among these poor women, that it would perhaps have been more

astonishing had they abstained from intoxication, than from dying from the effects of it."

"Do you not consider," I remarked, "that the wretched dwellings they are compelled to inhabit contributes greatly to their demoralization?"

"Most certainly I do, and beyond that I maintain that more than one-half of the vices of the poor are the effects of circumstances beyond their control. There is no more innate tendency to sin among them than among any other class of society."

"My friend," said B——, "is taking great interest in the question, and I wish to assist him as much as I can. Will you inform us of one or two localities in this neighbourhood that he could visit. Such, in fact, as would give him some insight into the manner in which the poor are compelled to live.

"I am now going towards the west-end," said the chaplain, "and if you will accompany me for a short distance, I will point out to you one or two spots that will not only show the condition of the working-classes in this neighbourhood, but also the little interest the authorities of this, the richest city in the world, take in the welfare of their poor." We readily accepted the offer, and started off immediately.

The first place we visited was between Newgate and Farringdon-street. We descended a long flight of steps, and turning to the left entered a miserable *cul de sac*. The space it enclosed was perhaps fifty feet square; the houses round it rose to three stories in height, and these were again overtopped by others on the rising ground. The sun certainly could not have entered the place for more than two hours in the course of the day. I would not have believed it possible that such a spot could have been found in London. The place, as usual, swarmed with children. They all bore the characteristics of misery and privation, dirt, squalor, and disease, and the few women we saw were fit mothers for such offsprings.

“Here,” said B——, “is one of our poor-law traps ; they are to be found in almost every district in the metropolis. It is in localities such as this that the present positive poor’s-rate, and the probable future tax for their relief in the next generation, are kept down, and the result of desperation in the starving poor avoided. First look at these women, and then let me ask any physiologist what must be the fate of their children ? The mothers are, as you perceive, half starved, and were in no better condition before their infants were born. After their birth, while suckling, their position is still worse. Extra expenditure is, of course, occasioned by the child, and the result naturally is, less food for the mother. Trace the history of the poor woman. She was probably formerly a healthy girl from the country, and has married a workman. A time of distress comes on, and the husband is thrown out of work, or has it only occasionally. The poor, on an average, do not possess a week’s means of subsistence without labour. In a short time, the husband is obliged to diminish his expenses, and he begins by taking cheaper lodgings. Food and warmth must be obtained, but he avoids as long as possible applying to the parish. His wife’s clothing first goes. The best animal heat and support for her would probably be meat diet, but meat is too expensive. With diminished clothing and want of proper food, the constitution becomes enfeebled, and she transmits her weakness to her child. The necessity of animal heat increases ; they seek a substitute for meat and clothing, and obtain it from gin. It is always at hand, not very expensive, and has likewise the inestimable advantage of shutting the world from them while under its influence. Indulgence in it, however, has not only its bad effects on the parents, but the infant suffers from its effects on the milk. Further economy is practised, and a part of a room is taken in a locality such as this, where every atom of God’s air is adulterated by another of man’s poison. The child, of

course, sickens, in common with the other children in the locality. The familiar fiend of the Poor-Law Board then comes to his harvest, and stamps the souls from the bodies of those principally under five years of age. Healthier lives are then imported from the country to supply the demand for labour; their children to be sacrificed like those of their predecessors, by the same infernal treatment."

"Is it really true," I inquired, "that there are many such places in the metropolis?"

"Too many, I am sorry to say," replied the Chaplain.

"Tell the whole truth," said B——. "They are spread systematically at certain distances over the whole surface; try what parish or district you please, and you will find its poor-law trap. Cross over to Holborn, and you will find half a dozen such. Go west, to Fulham or Kensington, and they are there. The Surrey side of the water is equally rich in them; but perhaps the whole parish of St. Clement's Danes is as good a specimen as can be named. In London, generally, the excess of births over deaths is perhaps thirty-two per cent. In that parish, the death-rate exceeds the births, and this frightful excess is occasioned solely by the enormous mortality of children under five years of age."

"But," I remarked, "might not the neglect of sanitary precautions occasion the result?"

"That entirely depends upon what you may term sanitary precautions. If you mean dirt, insufficient clothing, crowded rooms, with their impure atmosphere, and insufficient diet, I acknowledge it. If you allude to imperfect drainage and unhealthy soil, you are in error, it is the best drained portion of the metropolis. Thanks to sanitary improvements, the value of adult life has improved, but that great test of poverty, infantile mortality, is either stationary or has increased in all heavily-rated parishes. The worst feature in it is, that there appears no probability on the part of our



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class legislators interfering to stop this frightful cruelty."

"I am afraid, B——," said the Chaplain, smiling, "you are an incorrigible radical."

"I am afraid you are either a hypocrite," retorted B——, "or you must have occasionally a very difficult duty to perform. You pray beside the bed of a dying child in this locality, and comfort the parents to the best of your ability. How do you accomplish it? Do you tell them to bow with resignation to the will of Providence? If you do so, tell them the next time that that Providence has its altar in Gwydyr House, and that their child has been sacrificed to its worship. That it sits there enthroned, silent and indifferent, the statical power of infanticide. One word from its lips, and thousands might be saved, but its lips are of stone. You say I am a radical, as if it were a term of reproach; now listen. Not less than four thousand children die annually in this metropolis, more than the average of a moderately healthy locality in comfortable circumstances. They die from neglect, privation, dry nursing, want of proper medical attendance, and impure air; they might easily be saved. It requires but money, and that to a very small amount in comparison to the vast wealth of this capital. Last year the income-tax in the City of London alone was paid on eighteen millions.

Take the revenue of the west-end and other localities in the metropolis, as well as the annual income passing through the hands of its inhabitants of all classes, and it will amount to a sum that, considered as interest, the whole gold coin of the world would not be an equivalent to its capital. With that fact before us, let me ask you, as a clergyman, what excuse we could offer before heaven for forty, instead of four thousand children dying annually from preventable causes? Can anything be more horrible than such a system of legislation? Herod's massacre, in point of numbers, sinks

into comparative insignificance when contrasted with this enormous and continuous destruction of infant life. That tyrant had a state reason for his infamy ; nothing beyond the most abject selfishness or indifference can be urged as an excuse for ours."

As the chaplain was evidently uneasy under this tirade of B——'s, I proposed that we should visit some other locality.

We crossed over Farringdon Street, and were proceeding towards Holborn, when B—— stopped us for a moment. "Look," said he, pointing to the spot on which the Fleet Prison formerly stood, "a fortnight since, on a rainy night, with a cold easterly wind blowing, several poor creatures were grouped under the lee of that wall. At last one of them, a woman, got up, and taking a stone from the road, dashed it through the glass of a street gas-lamp. She did it solely to procure a night's shelter at the police-station. About a hundred yards beyond that spot, on the other side of the road, stands a large building—Bridewell. It was originally endowed as a charity and refuge for the houseless poor. It possesses an income of not less than eight thousand a-year, and is as much the property of the wandering poor, as any entailed nobleman's estate belongs to his family. For that sum, refuges for the destitute, not more than a mile asunder, might be established over the whole metropolis, and not less than £700 a-year might be applied to the maintenance, fuel, and attendance at each refuge. The Poor Law Board are perfectly well aware of the fact, but will not interfere. They say that charitable funds should not be applied to the reduction of the poor's rate, and an application to that good old British institution, the Court of Chancery, would simply be to deprive the poor of the faint hope that at present exists of the funds of the charity being applied to their benefit. And thus the affair rests, a perfect specimen of Government charitable legislation."

On arriving at the foot of Holborn Hill, the chaplain entered a wretched court on the left hand side. It presented the appearance of the most abject poverty, and was swarming with women and children. I noticed to him the prejudicial effects of crowding people together in such a locality. "I assure you," said he, "it is now comparatively depopulated to what I have seen it formerly. The court is 230 feet long. It is ten feet wide in the broadest part, and five feet in the narrowest. It contains only twenty-five inhabited houses; several of them have no back lights, or yards. I — visited it in the month of May, 1856. There were then living in it 130 men, 203 women, and 315 children. This frightful overcrowding, remember, did not arise from any sudden or unexpected combination of circumstances. The place had been in the same condition for many years. In one house, 17 feet by 16, having three floors, seventy persons lived. In one room were five adults and six children. In another, five adults and five children. In a third, 10 feet by 8, eight persons were huddled together, the rest of the rooms were occupied in the same manner. Single men and women, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, were dwelling together without the slightest distinction. In another court near this, the average number of inhabitants to each house is forty. But I am afraid you are already disgusted with your search."

"Not so, I assure you, I am, on the contrary, highly interested. But, I remarked, one house I perceive has been destroyed; was it standing when you visited the court?"

"It was destroyed about eighteen months since, in consequence of several fatal cases of fever having originated in it."

"Here, again" said B——, "is a specimen of civic benevolence. This house was destroyed about a year and a-half since, in consequence of its over-crowded — and insalubrious condition. As there is great want of

house-accommodation in this neighbourhood for the working classes, you would naturally think that a better class of house would have been built in its place. But their humanity stopped at the demolition. Up to the present moment, as you see, not a brick, not a hod of mortar, has been procured for the new building. This, however, is but a poor specimen of their system ; on leaving the court, I will show it you carried out on its grandest scale."

We visited two or three houses, but it would be useless to describe them to the reader. All things objectionable in a dwelling were to be found in them. Almost all requisites for comfort, decency, and health, were wanting.

On quitting the court, we were on the point of taking leave of the chaplain, when a tall gentlemanly-looking man passed, and B—— left us for a moment to speak with him. I took advantage of the opportunity afforded me to inquire if B—— was right in attributing the whole of the misery we had seen to the Government.

"Although I by no means agree with B—— in his wholesale abuse of all authorities, and the Poor Law Board in particular, there is no doubt that a great amount of blame is due somewhere. It is not to be supposed that the President of the Board of either political party could be indifferent to the immense amount of misery that exists, if he were aware of it. There certainly is a want of continuity between that official and the poor ; but where the breach is, I cannot say. I have heard it suggested that the officers it employs are not always chosen with judgment ; that they frequently have been educated for a profession, little likely to have any knowledge of the habits and wants of the poor, however pure their sympathy may be for their sufferings. Whether it arises from that cause or any other I know not, but Government is certainly not aware of the oppression and injustice too frequently prac-

tised on those the least able to resent, and who possess the least power to support it."

B—— here joined us, but his friend waited a few paces distant till we had taken our leave of the chaplain, who proceeded, much to my regret, on his journey westward. B—— then introduced me to his friend, Mr. Hutton, the surgeon of a poor city parish in the neighbourhood. "Hutton," said he, "is now visiting his pauper patients, and as I have to see a case of my own in Finsbury Square, we will walk part of the way with him. He will be able to give you a great deal of information, and I have told him how interested you are in the condition of the poor."

"I think" said Mr. Hutton, "that I can show you some cases, that for cruelty, absurdity, and injustice, shall equal or surpass anything you have met with; if not, there is a greater amount of misery in this world than I was at all aware of."

We crossed Farringdon Street. "Look" said B——, "at that immense space of barren ground to your left. Ten or twelve years since it was thickly covered with poor men's dwellings, and densely populated. That the majority of the houses were dilapidated and insufficient for their accommodation, I admit, and demoralization to an enormous extent was the result. One cause of its overcrowding arose from the destruction of the houses of the poor for the formation of New Oxford Street, as well as the City improvements, and the consequent expulsion of the inhabitants into this district. Numerous cases of frightful crime and disease were brought under the notice of the authorities, and they determined on reforming the whole locality. They did so. In American phraseology, they reformed it, off the face of the earth. The poor were driven bodily into parishes on the Surrey side of the water, already overburdened with pauperism. From that day till the present, not a single new dwelling has been erected for

them. But the work of destruction is not to stop here. Other improvements and reformatations are determined on in the districts, in which they now reside, and in a few months many thousands will be again ejected, to find other dwellings in still poorer localities, and not only without one word of objection on the part of the Government, but with its direct approval and assistance.

We had now entered a narrow street of three-storied poor-looking, dilapidated houses. At one of these Mr. Hutton stopped. "Come in with me," he said; "this case is worth your seeing." There were three bell handles at the door-post, and he pulled the top one. We waited for a few minutes, and the door not being opened, Mr. Hutton was on the point of ringing again, when a woman approached us with a latch key, and opened it for us. "I thought you might be coming here, doctor," said she, "and I followed you up the street. That poor woman is so ill she cannot leave her bed, and the old man pays no attention to anything, so I was afraid you would not have any one to open the door." We thanked her for her civility, and entered the passage, B—— remaining for us in the street. "Before going up stairs," said Mr. Hutton, "look at this. It may help to explain what you will see above." He conducted me into a shed in the back-yard. In it I found a plain black deal coffin, such as is used for paupers' funerals.

"Now come up stairs."

I followed him to the second story, and we entered the front room. The atmosphere was so impure, that I had some difficulty in breathing it when we first entered. In a few moments I recovered myself and looked around me. A most singular sight presented itself. Near the window, supported on two chairs, was a very neat, cloth covered coffin, large enough for an adult. The lid was partly pushed aside, and the face of an elderly woman was seen within. On a miserable half-tester bed lay a young woman, with an infant at



her breast. On a chair near the fire-place sat an old man, who had evidently been weeping bitterly. He appeared almost childish. His face expressed great satisfaction on seeing Mr. Hutton. He rose and held out his hand, which Hutton took. He attempted to speak, but after one or two ineffectual efforts, he again seated himself on the chair. We then went to the bedside of the young woman. She was very thin, and appeared to have little or no nutriment for her child, whom she held to her breast, as it was crying fractiously. The mother's face, naturally pale, was flushed on the cheek-bones, and her parched lips told too well her unhealthy condition. Hutton asked if she felt better.

"It is impossible for me to get better so long as mother remains unburied. It is now twelve days since she died, and I feel so weak and sickly, I could eat nothing even if I had it. If something is not soon done, I am sure baby will die, for I have no milk for it."

"Well, well," said the old man, testily, "it will all be over to-morrow; it is all settled now."

"But father insists on having the coffin lid open, and it makes the room so faint that I can hardly breathe."

"I don't think you need grudge me the short time that remains; you will have all your own way after to-morrow."

Hutton here interposed. "It is very natural that you should like to see your poor wife as long as you can, but you ought not to risk the health of your daughter, and the life of her child; let me put the lid on."

"No," said the old man, angrily, "I will do it myself; as long as she is here, it shall be touched by no one but me. So saying, he rose from his chair, and hurriedly adjusted the coffin lid, then seating himself again, he began sobbing. Hutton told the woman that he would

send her some medicine, and prepared to leave the room. The old man rose, and advancing towards us, "Don't be angry with me, doctor," said he, "I am very old, and you don't know all. I am very grateful for your kindness, and only wish I could show you that I am."

"Well," said Hutton, "that you can easily do, by going into the house to-morrow ; and remember, I expect it."

"I promise you faithfully I will ; as soon as she is under ground, I will do anything you advise." Hutton shook hands with him, and we left the house.

On getting into the street, I asked Mr. Hutton for some explanation of the scene I had witnessed, and as we continued our walk, B—— having joined us, he gave me a sketch of the old man's history. "He was formerly, when young, a small shopkeeper in an adjoining parish, and had married a young woman living in the neighbourhood. I believe she had been a domestic servant, at least, by her manners, she seemed to have belonged to that class. Quiet, orderly in her house, civil in her manner, and very industrious, she was in every way adapted for the companion of a poor man struggling on his way through life. Her husband was very fond of her, and they worked on together in great harmony. He was honest and indefatigable, but with little mental capacity. They had but one child, a daughter, the woman you saw. She married when young a journeyman decorative painter. He was a skilful workman, but who, although he had constant employment, had but little prudence or perseverance. The father did not like his son-in-law, and they saw but little of each other. By dint of economy and incessant industry the old couple made some little money, and the house they lived in, being wanted for some city improvements, they were well paid for their removal, having some years of their lease still unexpired. With their new acquisition of wealth, they got somewhat ambitious, and they

started in this parish in a far larger way of business. But although they were as industrious as formerly, they had not the ability to manage a concern of such magnitude, and the result was, that their affairs took a most unfavourable turn. Their newly-acquired pride added likewise to their misfortune. The mother considered that her daughter remaining the wife of a journeyman was incompatible with their present position, and induced her husband to advance a sum of money for the purpose of enabling her son-in-law to commence business on his own account. The naturally idle habits of the son-in-law became still worse by the loan. The small amount of industry he originally possessed vanished ; his love of pleasure remained. As a master, it was beneath him to work, and the workmen he employed showed but little respect to an employer who had always been their equal in idleness, and the inferior of a large majority among them in knowledge of the business. In the mean time the business of the old man fell off, and his son-in-law's affairs went to ruin still more rapidly. In a short time he was again a journeyman, having only acquired, by his short experience of the management of money, a habit of intoxication. The father-in-law was called upon continually to assist him, and, to keep his daughter from the workhouse, the old man was not deaf to the application. At last, finding his own circumstances were in such a position as to need some great addition to his income, to enable him to keep up appearances, he determined, contrary to the advice of his wife, to speculate in some merchandise which he considered would yield him a large profit. He tried his fortune, but as the fickle goddess seldom smiles on those who have most need of her favours, he became a ruined man. But misfortune seldom comes singly ; his wife, whose health had been for some time declining, was now past recovery. After the sale of his furniture, they removed to the room you saw, and her death occurred a few days after they entered it. The ruin

which had fallen on them had been foreseen for some time past by the old man, but all his terror of poverty, all his abhorrence of the Union, centred in one point—the fear of seeing his wife reduced to the condition of a pauper. They had worked on through life together; she had been the better portion of his existence. She had thought for him, and the respect due to the noblest attribute of his nature, he paid her. If she had been his mind, he had been her support. She had honourably fulfilled her portion of the contract, and, as an honest man, he dreaded failing in his own. Up to the hour of his wife's death no application had been made for parish relief, and the old man looked with no little satisfaction on four sovereigns he had saved from the general wreck of his property. It was sufficient to bury her. He ordered a coffin from the undertaker's,—the one you saw in the room—and gave instructions for the funeral. Two days, however, before the death of his wife, his daughter came home with an infant at the breast. Her husband had met with an accident, and was in the hospital. This occasioned some little expense, and the cost of the coffin was more than he had calculated on. The undertaker refused to conduct the funeral unless his expenses were guaranteed, and as this was impossible, there remained no alternative but an application to the parish for assistance. Of course the old man rebelled against such a proposition, but with some little sophistry I persuaded him that after having purchased the coffin, his duty had been fulfilled, and there could be nothing derogatory in receiving assistance for the funeral. He seemed but half-convinced, but I carried my point. The demand was made to the parochial authorities, but a serious legal difficulty arose. The law did not allow of partial assistance in cases of the kind, and if the old man had sufficient money to pay for that coffin, he ought to have shown better economy, and then he could have completed the funeral himself. With a kind motive, however, an order was passed for the whole

— expenses, but it insisted that the corpse should be removed from the present coffin, and placed in the one supplied by the parish. It would be impossible for me — to describe the effect that this order had upon the old man. He walked up and down his room, trembling with passion, and uttering the most absurd and impotent threats against the vestry. At one moment, his fury would amount almost to insanity,—the next he would seat himself in his chair, and cry like a child. Of course, the orders of parish boards are like those of the Medes and Persians, but the feelings of parish officers are occasionally far more pliable. I mentioned the circumstance to the vestry clerk, and the affair was arranged in the following manner. The order of the — Board was carried out as far as sending the pauper's coffin to the house. You saw it in the back-yard as you entered. The funeral will be performed to-morrow by the parish undertaker, in the coffin purchased by the old man. He is then to enter the house, and after he has left his present home, the pauper's coffin is to be removed, and the value of it will be given by the undertaker to the daughter, who will return to her own parish. The expressions of gratitude made use of by the old man when we left were in consequence of my exertions in getting the matter arranged."

"The daughter, then, was not confined in that house?"

"No; her husband and two children, one a boy of fifteen, the other a girl of eleven, occupied one room in the parish of —. One day, when attending the old woman, a few days before her death, the boy entered the room, and said, with great trepidation, that his mother was taken ill, and no one was with her. As I found the old couple were greatly distressed at the circumstance, I volunteered my services, and went with the boy immediately. On arriving, I found that the shock caused by her husband's accident had brought on premature labour. The child was not only not born, but the case presented considerable difficulties.

As they were in intense poverty, the parish surgeon had received an order to attend her. He transferred it to a student at a neighbouring hospital, who was studying midwifery. He was at lunch in the dissecting-room when the order arrived, and as he did not relish the idea of quitting his bread, cheese, and porter, he persuaded a fellow-student, a lad of seventeen, lately arrived for his first season, to attend for him. He, it appears, had not only never seen a case, but had never even attended a lecture on the subject. His friend gave him some hurried instructions, and told him 'in case he could not get on with it, to come back for him.' The lad started on his errand; his companion stopped to finish his lunch in comfort. When the young gentleman, still younger in appearance than in years, arrived at his patient's house, the poor woman's natural feeling of delicacy was so shocked by his very juvenile appearance, that the effect considerably retarded the birth. He appeared not older than her own son, and was evidently bashful and frightened. The situation was cruelly painful for her. Of course, helpless herself, her only assistance in the hour of her trouble was her little daughter, and this boy. A female neighbour had remained with her for some time, but had been obliged to leave to attend to some affairs of her own. After remaining with her for perhaps half-an-hour, and finding himself utterly incapable to the situation, the youth got so frightened that he was obliged to invent some excuse to leave, promising to return immediately. He directly proceeded to the hospital to find his friend, but he was attending a lecture. He waited till it was over. After describing the case to the best of his ability, his senior considered it was more difficult than he liked to take the responsibility of, and therefore declined attending it. The junior insisted on it.

"'Oh, bother!' said the former, 'go to the parish surgeon, and say you could not find me, and he must attend the case himself.'

"He went to that gentleman's house, but he was not at home. The errand boy was sent after him, and while he was being sought for I arrived, and with some difficulty saved both mother and child. A few days after the birth the poor woman returned to her father's, just in time to be present at her mother's death-bed. The two elder children were taken to the house of a journeyman mechanic, who had married their father's sister."

"But do you really mean that a boy of seventeen would be allowed to attend a woman in her confinement?"

"I believe," said Mr. Hutton, "you will find that a large proportion of the wives of the poorest are attended by lads under twenty."

"The system," I exclaimed, indignantly, "is most disgraceful."

B——, seeing the expression of surprise and anger on my countenance, laughed heartily.

"My dear fellow," said he, "don't lose your temper at trifles. If the infamy of the system were to be used as an excuse for stopping it, the poor would be obliged to attend each other. Be indignant, though, if you please, but don't look surprised, as it shows great ignorance of your profession. You object to the age of the lad, and appear to doubt the possibility of his being employed in cases of the kind. It was only last week that I saw the order of a parish board of guardians on a subject of the sort. Complaints had been laid before them that young lads had been suffered to attend women in labour. The fact was proved, and great indignation was excited among them in consequence. They determined to put an effectual stop to such proceedings, and the following entry was made in their minute-book: 'That for the future no medical assistant be allowed to attend, who shall be less than eighteen years of age, and who has not been at least three years in the acquirement of professional knowledge.'"

“Can the Poor Law Board be aware of these circumstances?”

“They are either aware of them, or are in an ignorance equally disgraceful; but I am rather inclined to think it is done with their knowledge. One of their pet metropolitan parishes allows their surgeon a few shillings for each midwifery case. Reduce the status of the profession as low as you please—as low, in fact, as the Poor Law Board appears to hold it. Consider the time and attention a case requires, and then let me ask you, even at the price of journeyman mechanic’s labour, whether the amount would be sufficient to secure a just and skilful attendance? From a feeling of delicacy, these things are not often spoken of, but I am certain that if the public were aware of the treatment these poor women occasionally receive, it would raise one general voice of indignation throughout the country. I will give you a case in point, and Hutton will vouch for the truth of my statement, for he attended the poor woman. She passed as the wife of a porter who was employed in a house, in one of the rich parishes in the neighbourhood of the Bank of England. She had, however, never been married to him. The man was detected in some act of dishonesty, and summarily dismissed; the woman, at the time, was hourly expecting her confinement. The man deserted her, and the wretched creature wandered about the streets the whole night; she could obtain no lodging, for she was, in fact, penniless. The next morning she applied to a policeman she met for advice; he recommended her to go to one of the guardians of the parish, and obtained for her his address. She found him at home, told her tale, and asked for an order to be admitted into the workhouse for her confinement. He listened to her, and then informed her he was not the proper officer to apply to, but at the same time gave her a shilling, and then told her she must sleep a night in any parish before she could be admitted. He then



kindly pointed out to her where she could obtain a lodging for the night at a very small price (he did not — inform her that the locality was in another parish), and told her to inquire for the clerk the next day for an order. The woman went as directed, and secured a room for the night, but having misunderstood her instructions, applied to be admitted into the work-house. She was questioned as to her right on that parish for relief, and when she mentioned that she had taken a room in it, but had not yet slept there, she was told she must apply again the following day. Her address, however, was taken down.

“It was now one o’clock, and she determined, after taking some food, to seek for her reputed husband. His friends lived in the neighbourhood of Bermondsey. From the few pence that remained—for she had been obliged to pay for her night’s lodging in advance—she took a penny, and having purchased and eaten a roll, she started, sore-footed and weary, on her search. Her courage supported her, though her journey was useless; none had seen him. At every house that offered the slightest probability of receiving information she inquired for him. The same negative, always given with kindness and sympathy, added to her sorrow; the same advice to apply at some other dwelling increased her fatigue. Faint and broken-spirited, she began to retrace her steps. On crossing London Bridge she felt so exhausted, that she was obliged to rest herself upon a seat in one of the recesses for nearly an hour. The freshness of the evening assisted in restoring her strength, and after that usual woman’s solace in affliction—a flood of tears—she again started on her way. As she advanced nearer her lodging, even that stimulus to the weary—the prospect of a night’s rest—was powerless upon her, and her pace became the slower as she neared her bed. It was dark night before she entered the street, and as she approached the house her strength appeared nearly exhausted. She reached

the door; the mistress of the house stood at it to receive her. 'I have waited,' she said, 'to give you the money you paid me this morning; you can't sleep here to-night.'

"'Good God, why not?'

"'Why, my husband, without my knowing it, had let the bed to another woman, and so you can't have it.'

"'But I have paid for it.'

"'There is your money back again, you can get a bed further on; and I must not offend my regular customers.'

"She did not say that the clerk of the board had called — on her in the morning, and reminded her that if the poor creature were confined in her house, she would most probably be unable to pay for her room; that the parish would have to maintain the child, and that the — poor's-rate was enormously heavy already. The poor wretch felt neither anger nor sorrow at the treatment, but went again on her way. But if the mind were too fatigued to feel, the body was more sensitive. The head thrown back, the slow step marked by the scraping sound of the foot upon the pavement as it advanced, the power to lift it having gone, though the body swayed from side to side to ease the limb which was in action; the slow, yet deep inspiration—all told its exhaustion. She wandered slowly onward till past midnight, and then seated herself on the footstep of a door near Farringdon Market. Shortly afterwards a policeman passed.

"'You must not sit there, my good woman,' said he.

"'I have no place to go to, and I am too tired to move.'

"'Well, I can't help that, my orders are not to allow any one to sit down on the door-steps. You must not be here when I come round next time.' He went on his beat, and when he passed again she was still there; when he saw her he crossed over on the other side,

and pretended to be examining the fastenings of the houses. The cold dawn found the poor woman still on the same spot. At last, a kind but husky voice, accosted her with 'I say, mother, that don't seem a proper bed for you.' She raised her head, and saw before her a lame, shabby old man with a basket under his arm, and a dirty handkerchief round his mouth.

" 'I should be glad to get another, if I knew where to find it,' was the answer.

" 'Well, that's nothing very hard, as long as one can pay for it ; but I suppose you can't.'

" 'I could pay for one, but I don't know where to find it.'

" 'Well,' said he, 'if you're not very particular, come with me ; there's an empty bed in our room, we're rather crowded, but it's better than the stones.'

"She attempted to rise, but could not ; he assisted her, and then supporting her with his arm, they moved off into one of the courts in the neighbourhood, he good-humouredly receiving the jokes of his acquaintance as to 'whether his old woman liked that sort of thing.' Her senses were too dulled to hear them. On arriving at the house, he called the landlady, who, with much more sympathy than the last, admitted her (the other was a much more respectable house), and the old man wished her good bye.

" 'Thank you kindly,' said the woman.

" 'I don't want no thanks,' said the old man, and he hurried off to purchase his day's stock of water-cresses. The woman was confined the next night, and Hutton attended her. In the room was another woman, the wife of a soldier, who had been confined there two days before ; her child was dead. The old man sat outside the room-door on the landing-place till it was time for him to go to market, his wife assisting the poor woman till the infant was born."

"Was any notice," I inquired, "taken of the clerk, — who advised the landlady not to admit her ?"

"I spoke to him myself on the subject ; he acknowledged it, and justly exonerated himself by putting the blame on the system. 'The City parishes,' said he, 'are enormously rich or miserably poor ; the rich parishes thrust their paupers for relief on the poorer, and these thrust them in the best manner they can on their neighbours. Every parish relieves itself by any means in its power ; no dodge is considered unfair, and the poorest parish generally is the one that suffers. If the child had been born here, we should have been saddled with the expense of maintaining it, and we are too poor to incur such an outlay. The parish in which it was born is perhaps the poorest in London, and they must take it ; neither having been benefitted by a day's labour, either from father or mother. To show you the injustice of the laws—a poor woman, possessing a trifling annuity, several years since, rented a room in the next parish ; she had one son, he was a pauper in the Union, and maintained at the expense of the parish his mother resided in. His constitution had been ruined by drink and the effects of a hot climate—he had been a soldier in India, and had been discharged. Some repairs were required in the house his mother lived in, and she removed into this parish. Her son was persuaded to leave the workhouse for a few days to visit his mother. By some means he became possessed of a little money, and there being no restriction on him, he drank to such an excess that insanity exhibited itself. He was removed to the union, and we have been obliged to maintain that pauper for six years. You may thus see the cruelty of the shifts we are occasionally put to, to protect ourselves.

"Strange as it may appear," continued Mr. Hutton, "it is hardly fair to lay the blame on the parish officers. In my own parish we lately had a case of the kind. A poor man came on a visit to his sister for a few days ; she had but one room, but as she was a

very decent woman, a bed was made up for her brother on the landing-place. The situation being exposed to the continual currents of air caused by opening and shutting the street-door, he was attacked with inflammation of the lungs, and removed to the Union. He soon got better, but was far from strong, yet we naturally wished to be relieved from the expense of maintaining him. He was told, it was a great pity to see a man capable of earning his own living residing as a pauper in the workhouse. He was asked if he were furnished with twenty or twenty-five shillings, whether he could not get a livelihood as a costermonger? The poor fellow readily caught at the idea; the money was given him, and he left the house. His health, however, was not sufficiently established, nor was his constitution naturally of sufficient strength for such an occupation. His money soon fled, and he was again obliged to apply for an order to enter the Union. 'No,' was the reply; 'you are a vagrant, now; you have no further claim on us; go somewhere else.' Where the poor fellow went to, I know not; I never saw him again."

"But, did I understand you clearly that in the same room were two other females, the wife of the soldier, and the old woman?"

"Come in here," said Mr. Hutton, "and judge for yourself; the poor woman we are now going to see was confined the day before yesterday."

We entered a three-storied house, B—— remaining below. We found the patient in the back room at the top of the house. A rickety table occupied the centre. There were two or three chairs, some cooking utensils, and a few pieces of crockery. In a corner near the window was a shake-down bed. On it, lying on his back, was a working man, dressed in his ordinary clothes, but without his coat. Two children, of perhaps five and seven years of age, were attempting to play with him, but the listless

manner of the whole showed how little merriment was in it. On the foot of the bed was seated a half-starved-looking woman, occupied in putting a patch upon the man's coat. In the opposite corner was another bed ; on it was a young child asleep. Its mother was employed in cooking some potatoes over a few embers in the grate, and by her side was her son, a lad of perhaps ten years of age. She was giving him some instructions respecting the purchase of a little grocery. A third bed was in another corner, and on it was stretched our patient. Near the head was standing her eldest daughter, a girl of perhaps nine years of age ; she was her mother's nurse. Holding by her frock was a little creature, certainly not more than four years old, but who looked still younger from her diminutive size. The mother looked feverish ; and the infant, who was sleeping on its mother's arm, had also a most unhealthy appearance. The poor woman cast on Hutton that confiding, supplicating glance ; that imploring look so common to them, as she partially drew down the ragged sheet to show her baby. A few ordinary inquiries were made and answered.

"Well, well," continued Hutton, "keep up your spirits ; I have no doubt your boy will live to be a fine young fellow yet. I will ask the relieving officer to get you half-a-pint of beer a-day and some meat ; but remember you must not be low-spirited, or I will not answer for the consequences."

"I can't be very cheerful," said the woman, "when my husband has no work, and my children no food."

"Let us hope for better times," said Hutton ; "send your daughter to my house this afternoon, and I will send you some medicine."

We were preparing to leave the room, when the woman who was employed with her needle, laid it down, and taking one of her children by the hand brought it to Hutton.

"Will you tell me what's the matter with my little

girl, Sir ; she get's so pale and thin, I can't think what it is ; and there seems something hard coming in her throat. I thought, perhaps, you'd have no objection to send her a little medicine when you sent Mrs. Jones'."

"The only medicine that will do her good is meat, beer, good living, and good air ; by good living, remember, I don't mean sweets."

"I am afraid it will make little difference what you mean, Sir, if that's what is wanted, for my husband has not had a stroke of work for the last fortnight, and we're little better than starving."

"Send me a phial, then, and I will send her something to rub it with ; and you must keep her throat as warm as you can."

We then left the room, and joined B—— in the street.

"I suppose," said Mr. Hutton to me, "you are now convinced."

"I certainly am ; but would not the government authorities, if they were aware of these things, put a stop to them."

"If they considered," said B——, "that the room you have just seen was so overcrowded as to be injurious to the health of the neighbourhood, they would apply their infallible and usual nostrum—turn them out. They have done it in thousands and thousands of cases : I defy you to mention ten instances where they have interested themselves to find them shelter."

"Does not the Poor Law Board interfere in their behalf?"

"The Poor Law Board is the unflinching and consistent advocate of the present system. I once had the honour to be in the presence of a high dignitary of that office. I took the opportunity of bringing to his notice the condition of the poor. I showed him how diseases from profligacy were increased by extreme poverty ; how infantile mortality was increased by the same

cause ; and how theft and drunkenness flourished in proportion to the destitution in a parish. He listened with aristocratic condescension to my statement ; appeared bored, and, after having yawned, told me, in words very like the following, 'that he had no doubt of the correctness of my figures, but it was absurd to imagine the cases I had mentioned arose from poverty—utterly absurd. The cause was very easy to be found ; and he wondered, with the experience I appeared to have had, I could have come to such an erroneous opinion—utterly erroneous. Their misery and profligacy arose from an excess of original sin, peculiar to the working classes.' "

"Imagine," said Mr. Hutton, "the demoralizing effect of a case of the kind. When I attended that poor woman, I turned the children and two of the men out of the room on the stair-case ; the third man was drunk, and refused to go. What must be the effects on the minds of the children ? The youngest are already beginning to reason ; the elder boy and girl are both sharp children. What conclusion must be drawn in their minds from the whole of the scene, and the details which follow it ? Remember, this is no isolated case ; there is not a medical practitioner employed by parishes that has not had several like it. Ought we to be surprised that the children of the poor are profligate ? "

We had by this time arrived in a street where Mr. Hutton had to visit another patient. We entered the house, but as we were proceeding up stairs, we were stopped by a decent-looking old woman.

"You had better not go in, Sir," she said ; "it is all over now, poor fellow."

"When did he die ?" said Mr. Hutton.

"About an hour ago, Sir."

"Was his wife with him ?"

"Yes, Sir. Oh ! poor man, how thankful he was when he saw her come in this morning. He knew



perfectly well that he was dying ; but every look of care and sorrow left him when she came in. He was too exhausted to speak, but he smiled when she sat down on his bed and took his hand in her's. From the time she seated herself till his death, he only once took his eyes off her, and that was to raise his head and look round the room, as if trying to see his children."

"Where is she now ?"

"She is with him, and dreadfully cut up."

"Poor woman," said Mr. Hutton, "we will not disturb her," and we then left the house. "A fortunate thing for both," said he, when we were in the street, "that he is dead. He has been lingering in consumption for some weeks past. He was a journeyman mechanic. Of his history previous to my being called in I know nothing. He appeared to be a very decent fellow, and his wife is a very kind and respectable woman. Poor creature, she has lately had a very wretched time of it. When I first saw them, they were in a state of utter destitution. He had been out of work for some time, and his wife and two children were little better than starving. The parish made them an allowance, but, of course, insufficient for the maintenance of the four. Application was made for a greater amount of relief, but it appears that the guardians had either not the power to grant it, or that the precedent of wholly maintaining a family of four persons out of the house would be too dangerous in as poor a parish as this. They still struggled on. Consumption, as you know, does not always terminate so rapidly as is expected, and the poor fellow still lingered on. In the meantime, his wife was getting miserably thin ; she had already raised money for their support on every available article of dress, that she and her children possessed. The children also suffered considerably, but not in proportion to their mother, as their neighbours, almost as poor as them-

selves, were continually thrusting pieces of bread into their hands, when they met them. The sight of the poor appears to be necessary to excite charity, and a week's wet weather having kept the children to their sick father's room, that occasional supply of food was lost to them. From want of air and nourishment they both fell ill, and again the father was appealed to to permit his wife and children to enter the house. He obstinately refused either to allow them, or to move there himself. The situation of the poor woman was painful in the extreme. On the one hand, her affection for her sick husband kept her to his bedside ; on the other, the fear of losing her children tempted her to accept the offer. I turned the balance by showing her, that she was not justified in sacrificing her children, and she determined, contrary to the direct wishes of her husband, to enter the house ; the guardians kindly allowing her to leave every morning for the purpose of nursing him, but with positive orders to return again in the evening. The poor fellow was at first naturally dreadfully enraged, but by degrees his passion calmed down ; however, I am fully persuaded that his death was accelerated by the circumstance. That old woman you saw attended him every night, solely from pure kindness ; and fortunately his death occurred when his wife was with him in the daytime."

"But is it possible that, in a case of this kind, the law would not allow the guardians to give them sufficient to maintain them, without breaking up the family ? "

"I believe." said B——, "the law would not allow it ; but even if it would, such an amount of liberality would never be indulged in. Should a parish adopt such a system, every destitute person would find an excuse to apply to it for assistance, and it would soon become entirely pauperised. The greatest protection the rate-payers possess is in what is called the workhouse test. The case just mentioned by Hutton is an example

of it. The poorer a man's circumstances become, the stronger are the ties of affection to his family. I have often watched these poor creatures during their descent into abject poverty. As every fresh privation falls on them, their love for each other increases. As misery shuts the attractions of the outer world from the husband ; as the circle of his friendships, hopes, and exertions contracts, his love for his wife and offspring concentrates. Food must be obtained, and he applies to the guardians for relief. Being a poor man, he is naturally in a poor parish—a rich one would have afforded him no shelter. A trifle at first is given, enough to protract starvation. A further application is made, and the workhouse test is applied. If he will break up his family, he need not starve ; they will then give him a workhouse hospitality. He glances on those around him. All that are dear to him in this world are in that wretched room, naked and perishing ; still he refuses. The instinct which God has planted in his breast, to comfort and protect his helpless wife and children, becomes stronger in his trouble ; but the temptation the parish has placed before him, in offering to keep them from starvation, becomes irresistible, and he gives up all. At no moment were they dearer to him than when parting with them for a mess of workhouse gruel."

"Do not the men," I inquired, "frequently desert their families ?"

"Very rarely ; it is true, you see notices of the kind frequently posted up, but you must remember they are the exceptions ; and when you consider the fearful amount of misery that exists in this town, the exceptions in comparison to the gross numbers are but trifling."

We had now arrived at a sort of shed, but covered in and enclosed on all sides, and B—— spoke to a very respectable-looking young man standing at the door.

"Well, Mr. Jones, is school over ?"

"Yes, Sir."

“How do you get on?”

“Very badly, Sir; I am sorry to say that our subscriptions fall off exactly in proportion as our applications for admissions increase; and if we have not shortly some influential persons to assist us, we must close our doors.”

“This,” said B——, addressing me, “is a ragged school; and, as you hear, likely soon to be broken up for want of support. Is it not perfectly disgraceful that money not only cannot be obtained, but that, in a city containing such enormous endowments for gratuitous education, subscriptions should have to be called for? No metropolis in the world possesses such immense wealth for gratuitous education: none give so little.”

“Have you any applications for admission?” I inquired of the teacher.

“A great many, Sir. It is shocking to see the number of poor lads that are both willing to work and to learn, and can do neither.”

“Do they submit willingly to discipline?”

“Very easily, I assure you: it is astonishing to see how much anxiety there is among them to become respectable.”

“But,” I inquired, “does not the Government take some steps in their behalf?”

“There are the national schools,” B—— answered, “and admirable institutions they are; but a certain amount must be raised by the pupils or their friends, or the Government will not assist them. Some of these schools are most efficiently managed, and not only do great credit to the Education Office, but also to every one connected with it. There is an excellent school of the kind in this neighbourhood—St. Thomas Charterhouse, I think it is called: it is the largest in London. You must not, however, confound it with the notorious Charterhouse Schools, or you would be doing the former a gross injustice. But perhaps a more curious and perfect specimen of the wish of the poorer classes

for education may be seen in one of the poorest parishes in the metropolis. I had occasion a few days since to call on an East-end incumbent who takes great interest in its management. It numbers no fewer than 1,000 pupils. The school-rooms are formed of three railway arches. I first visited the infant school. It was admirably arranged: the children, although some of them bore sadly the marks of great poverty, were all clean. They went through their lessons and exercises correctly, and seemed perfectly alive to praise, although the eldest did not exceed seven years of age. There might possibly have been 200 in the room. They all seemed happy and contented; and, although under admirable discipline, severity appeared to be unknown. We next visited the girls' schools. Here, again, the same order and regularity were visible; and, although there were at least 200 girls of from seven to twelve years of age, the most perfect silence and regularity prevailed. They were presided over by one governess, an amiable, lady-like little woman of perhaps twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, but who was assisted in her duties by several pupil-teachers—girls of twelve or fourteen years old. No commander of a regiment could have held his men under more perfect control than she evidently had over her pupils, without the slightest appearance of harshness or unkindness. One of the senior classes had just finished their exercises in writing, and I examined the slates of several. Although capital letters were occasionally used incorrectly, it was difficult to find an error in orthography in any. The boys' school was also in admirable order, but poverty seemed more strongly marked on them than among the girls; some were evidently miserably poor, but all were clean. The pence of many of the boys must have been subscribed by charitable individuals. The last room I visited was for a few senior boys in training for pupil-teachers. They appeared about twelve or fourteen years of age; and there might

perhaps have been as many as twenty of them. They were listening to a master explaining some not very elementary branches of natural philosophy—indeed, I felt surprised at finding them so far advanced. I was invited to examine them in chemistry. I was told that the boys capable of answering my questions would hold up their hands, and I was to choose the one I wished to reply to me. My first question was—‘Do you know anything of the chemistry of respiration?’ About seven or eight boys immediately raised their arms. I then questioned them on the composition of the atmospheric air, its changes in the lungs, the cause of the change of colour in the blood, the causes which made a room and other localities prejudicial to health, and on several other subjects, all of which were correctly and readily answered. I then saw their exercise books. The handwriting of several would have shamed many a Treasury clerk, and the orthography and composition were faultless. They also showed me their drawings, some of which exhibited great talent. They all seemed highly delighted with the praise I gave them. There was no bashfulness among them. The incumbent treated them with the utmost kindness. He was in their little world the greatest man they had seen ; and they seemed to think themselves equally worthy of kind feelings from others. On leaving, I had again to pass through the senior girls’ school. They were standing up for their singing lesson. They sang a hymn, two songs, and an anthem with great earnestness and precision. Some of their voices were exceedingly good ; as pure and clear sopranos as could be desired. Their governess led them. With the score in her left hand and her *baton de mesure* in her right, she kept her voices well together, and if occasionally they were somewhat out of tune, in point of time they were remarkably correct, and the feeling thrown into their performance was equally creditable to both mistress and pupils. I was informed

that these schools did not owe one farthing ; that the subscription of the children, added to the Government allowance and the collections at the church, fully covered their expenditure. So anxious were the poor for instruction, that many of the parents of the children paid 6d. a week for extra lessons after school hours. This anxiety was the more remarkable from the profound poverty of the whole parish ; not less on an average than four thousand summonses being obliged to be issued every quarter for the collection of the poors'-rate.

“Let me contrast your description, Sir,” said the ragged-school teacher, “with that of another national school at the West End of the town. It is attached to a church which has, perhaps, the wealthiest congregation in the world ; six of its members might be named who could buy up the whole of the eastern parish between them. On one side of the church is a square which contains ninety houses of an average rental of £350 a year. On another side is a row of perhaps eighty houses or palaces, which average £500 a year each. On a third side is a row of forty houses of £250 each. Besides these, there are many detached residences of the nobility of enormous value. The national schools have only 190 pupils, and are in debt. A short time since a sermon was preached in their behalf by the incumbent, a most worthy, independent, and benevolent man. The collection was so small, that the following Sunday he addressed his congregation in something like the following terms :—‘I must call your attention to the small amount of money collected after my sermon last Sunday. It is inexcusable on your parts. There is not one among you that is not possessed of great affluence ; in the worldly acceptation of the term, you are all rich. The pupils of these schools have greater claims on your charity than is usually met with in national schools attached to churches—they are all the children of your servants ; of those on whose

exertions so much of your comfort and welfare depends. But two individuals among you subscribe with any liberality. You complain of the hardness of the times (it was at the termination of the Crimean war), yet not a man among you has laid down a carriage, not one of you has kept a horse the less, not one of you has dismissed a footman. You have economised but in one way—your charities. When I first came into this neighbourhood, its amount of wealth was less than one-half what it now is, but the subscriptions to the schools were far greater than at present. As wealth has increased, the subscriptions have become systematically less, and if it continues, we shall have no alternative but to close the schools from want of funds to keep the doors open.’

“Among the many acts of injustice,” said B——, “perpetrated on the poor there is perhaps none more infamous than the treatment they receive on the subject of education. Of the enormous educational endowments, how few, in comparison to their wealth, are applied to their benefit? Formerly, in the days of the Catholics (albeit I love them not), the child of the working man, if possessed of ability, had the power of rising in the world. By entering into holy orders, there was hardly any office in the State that was not open to him. At the present time the church is, of all professions, the one most difficult for him to enter. Take the senior class of the schools I visited. Formerly, some long-headed priest might have noticed in a school of the kind a clever lad, and having taken him by the hand, might have assisted him to obtain some honourable and important position. At the present day, what chance is there for a boy of genius, if unfortunately he has been born of the working-classes? He may probably rise to be a pupil-teacher, with a salary of ten pounds for the first year and twelve for the second, and there he stops; yet there are boys among them capable of anything that high abilities, combined with industry, can obtain.



There are ample means for them if the will to assist them had not been wanting in the Government. Take, for example, the Charter House, on an income of £32,000 a-year—at least, it will reach to that sum next year—it educates and clothes 80 poor boys, who, by the bye, are not poor, and 44 poor men, and then leaves no surplus. One functionary on the establishment, a clergyman, whose office is entirely a sinecure, receives a salary of £1,200 a-year from this charity. I asked an ardent admirer of his, how he reconciled such conduct with Scripture, when so many widows could not obtain education for their children without payment, and so many fatherless were left to perish in ignorance?

“‘I do not see,’ he replied, ‘how Scripture prohibits it?’

“I quoted the text, ‘Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.

“‘If ye afflict them in any wise, and they cry unto me, I will surely hear their cry.

“‘And my wrath shall wax hot.’

“He blandly told me it was so under the Jewish law, but that we lived under a milder and more blessed dispensation. All over the metropolis the same injustice may be seen. The Blue Coat School has an income of some £65,000 a-year. It is also a charity, and no boy is eligible whose parents possess more than £300 a-year, unless they have large families. How many of the clergy, the army and navy, as well as the medical profession, would give up all claims to charitable sympathy if they possessed that income? Another school, from successive metropolitan improvements, has so frequently sold portions of its ground to enormous advantage, that it now possesses a splendid income, enough, in fact, to educate several thousand children gratuitously, if its funds were economically administered; but the population has greatly decreased in its neighbourhood by the alterations which have

been made in its locality. Not knowing what to do with the funds, the trustees have expended some £25,000 on its school-rooms and buildings. The Dulwich College, even under its amended statutes, is a further proof of the injustice the poor receive. Think of its enormous wealth, and then consider how small a portion of it is applied to their benefit. Some of the educational trusts belonging to the City Companies are of immense value. There, again, the same system of fraud upon the poor may be found. Whenever a doubt existed whether the original trust was for charitable education or gratuitous grammar-schools, the decision has invariably been given against the poor in favour of the rich. By what reasoning the children of the working man are excluded from the benefit of the grammar-schools, it would be difficult to determine. One rule seems to have guided all our law authorities on the subject—that the less a class in society shall require gratuitous assistance in the education of their children, the more valuable shall be the assistance it receives. I once took the trouble to find out, if possible, what amount of funds for gratuitous education, presentations, and scholarships was to be found in London. When I stopped, although I had not completed my task, it amounted to £165,000 a-year. An amount, if properly administered, sufficient to educate every child in it. Again, in the City charities, by what arguments can the present management of these trusts be defended? The different guilds, for which gratuitous education was provided, no longer exist. Take, for example, the Skinners. They have been driven out of the City, and are now at Bermondsey. How many of their working men's children are benefited by the funds it possesses? How many skinners are among the recipients of its charities? The Mercers are another wealthy company. Those employed in the manufacture of mercery receive but little of the charity provided for them by the piety of former ages.

But another subject ought to claim the attention of the Protestant public to the subject of the gratuitous education. The Catholics are using every endeavour to promote it among the poor. They teach well, are most kind to their pupils, are much loved by them, and their scholars increase in numbers daily. Although the sum required by our National Schools is but trifling, still to the labourer it is a heavy tax. A man earning thirteen shillings a-week has but little left for education, after paying for the mere animal wants of his family. Referring to the City trusts. A friend of mine was educated at one of its wealthy schools. The charity gave a dinner a few weeks since to some of the old pupils. I asked him what sort of a dinner it was?

“Magnificent; but still I do not think it altogether justifiable. The contract was taken at three guineas a-head. The cards of invitation were so handsome, that each must have cost as much as would have given a poor man a dinner.”

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## CONCLUSION.

The day had now so far advanced that we were obliged to discontinue our search, and an appointment was made for another meeting.

On looking over my manuscript in the evening, I was struck by the manner I had deviated from the course I intended to have pursued, and also by the monotony of the subject—continued bad legislation and selfishness on the one part, and the most exemplary patience and long-suffering on the other. The sympathy I originally felt for the poor is now less than the anger I feel at their treatment. I have, therefore, no alternative but to throw myself on the indulgence of the reader, trusting to his kindness to look without severity on whatever may appear unfavourable either in style or matter.

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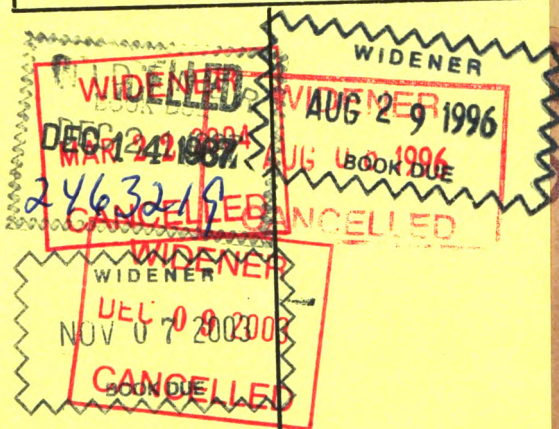
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